

1996 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

A COMPLETE LOOK AT THE NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS



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Huskers Illustrated

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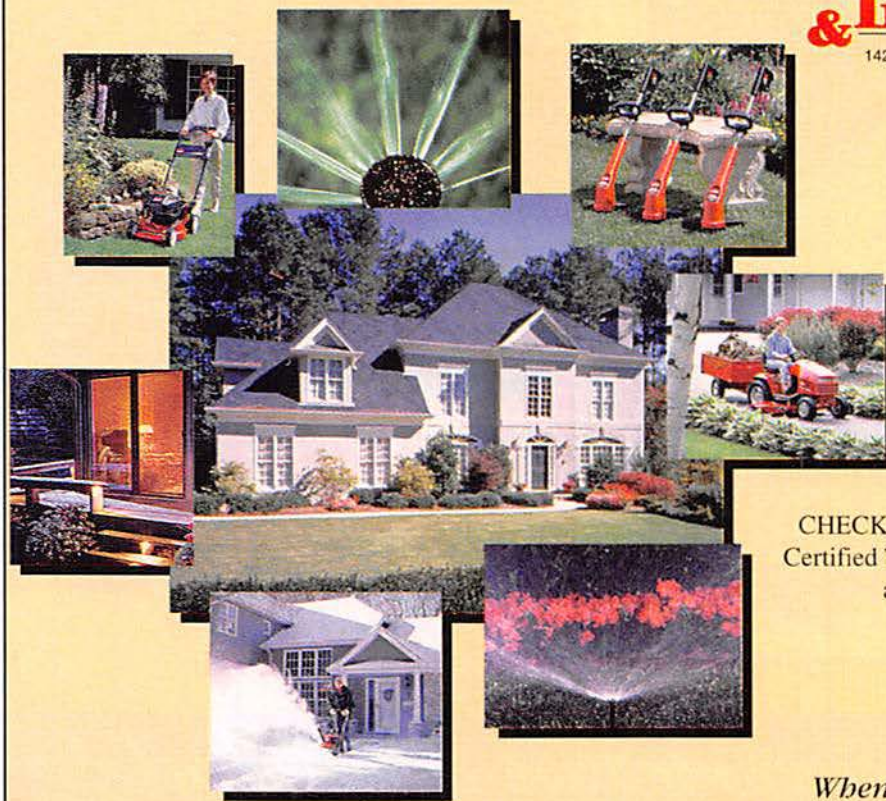
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fromTheEDITOR

Picking a preseason No. 1 usually means very little in the grand scheme of college football. But the prognostication process does allow enough debate to keep people talking through the lean summer months.

In the last four years, we have only predicted the eventual champion once and that was last year with Nebraska. Other publications stayed away from the defending champions in 1995 for various reasons and threw their individual lots with Florida State and Texas A&M. One even had Southern Cal as the eventual kings of college football.

Luckily, our prediction paid off.

So with all the self gratification behind us, it's time to push our luck once again. Nebraska is again our preseason No. 1.

In making our selection, we researched over 20 programs and picked the brains of fellow writers across the nation. There were compelling arguments for at least four teams. But when the smoke cleared and the arguing tapered off, Nebraska was the team left standing.

The national support this year seems to be behind Tennessee and Florida State. But my feeling is that Nebraska finished the 1995 (and 1994) season on top and should stay there until a team proves otherwise. Are the Volunteers or Seminoles built like national contenders? Of course they are, but so is Nebraska.

People are quick to point out that Nebraska is hindered without Tommie Frazier at the helm. And that's a valid concern. Nebraska will have to address shortcomings both at quarterback and in the secondary.

Scott Frost showed at times this spring that he can lead Nebraska behind its mammoth and veteran offensive line. And a backfield that returns Ahman Green and Damon Benning will help take some of that pressure off Frost.

The real concern could be in the secondary where the Huskers could be a touch slower and inexperienced. If Nebraska can't play one-on-one, it will affect the scheme defensive coordinator Charlie McBride likes to harass offenses with. But there is a balancing factor in that Nebraska's front seven is probably the best Tom Osborne has ever coached.

The addition of a Big 12 Championship game adds yet another obstacle in the Huskers' path as they attempt to become the first Division I-A team to ever win three straight national titles. Nobody ever said it would be easy.

But then again, neither is picking a preseason No. 1.

Chris Greer, Editor



LETTERS

I would like to take this time to express my deepest, most heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of Brook Berringer. The tragic news of his untimely death shook me and brought to mind how fragile life is. It helps put into proper perspective the place that sports have in the real world.

Although I never had the privilege of meeting Brook, I followed his career at Nebraska closely. I was always thoroughly impressed with him on and off the field. He will be missed by all of us that share the love of the Big Red.

Sean Sample
Westminster, Colo.

Why was there nothing in the May issue of *Huskers Illustrated* on the death of Brook Berringer? I realize that most people don't like to deal with the past, and he was a former player, but I thought there should have been an article on the tragedy. Out here, all we got was what was on ESPN.

Kathy Morales
Tampa, Fla.

We were unable to cover the tragic death of Brook Berringer because the May issue had already been mailed. Even though it's been nearly two months since his death, Mike Babcock has written a reflective piece for this issue (see page 110). Former player or not, Berringer's death saddened most of Lincoln and us at *Huskers Illustrated*.
— Editor

In the article, "Too Many Tailbacks" (May 1996), it was stated that DeAngelo Evans had broken Barry Sanders' high school rushing records. This is a bit misleading for two reasons.

First, Sanders' high school records were not all that great and have been surpassed by other backs in Wichita since Sanders and before Evans.

Secondly, Sanders played for North High School, a city league class 6A team. Evans played for 4A private school, Collegiate. In Wichita, there is a huge difference

between the two. Collegiate is not a part of the Wichita City League.

Believe me, I am not trying to take anything away from Evans. I have seen him play and he is very good. However, let's be careful before we compare him to Sanders.

And if you think DeAngelo has a bright future, wait a few years. He has a little brother who is equally, if not more, talented.

Michael R
ntmail@net-shopper.co.uk

Can you explain why Nebraska took back Kate McEwen's basketball scholarship following the season? When I heard this I was literally sick to my stomach. I defended Nebraska last year when a lot of people wrote off the university as one which cared more about winning than its student-athletes. This decision seems contrary to everything they said before. I can't see myself sticking up for a university which turned its back on a young woman after she went through so much adversity.

Paula Stevens
Las Vegas, Nevada

Kate McEwen, who was attacked by Lawrence Phillips last fall, did have her athletic scholarship revoked, but was given the chance to finish her education with the athletic department paying the bill. McEwen hadn't produced on the court in the last two years to the satisfaction of head coach Angela Beck and was released.

McEwen's release caused nationwide outcry and was even addressed during ESPN's NFL draft day coverage when Phillips was selected by the St. Louis Rams.

Days after the announcement was made, Beck and athletic director Bill Byrne reinstated McEwen's scholarship.

"Typically, a decision on an athlete's scholarship renewal or non-renewal follows standard procedure," Byrne said in a release following the reinstatement. "However, we recognize this is a special situation that requires special sensitivity. We have the utmost concern about our student-athletes' total well-being as well as their athletic development."

"I am sorry that this situation made it appear otherwise." — Editor

Please send your comments and questions to **Letters**, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (214) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length.

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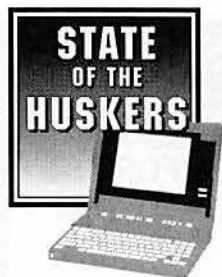
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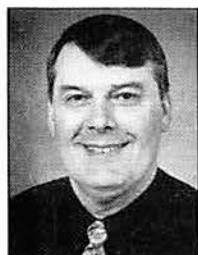
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If Nebraska is to win a third straight national title, it will have to rely even more on its dominating defense



**By
MIKE
BABCOCK**

It is accepted wisdom that defense wins football championships.

Nebraska's three consecutive undefeated regular seasons and back-to-back national titles could be offered in support of such a popular assertion.

The maturation of an attacking, 4-3 base defense built on speed has been a key to the Cornhuskers' remarkable success, at a time when reduced scholarship numbers and other cost-cutting measures, mandated by the NCAA, have produced a degree of parity.

Until the change in defensive philosophy, which has been accomplished over several years, Nebraska couldn't break a pattern of post-season doldrums. Statistically, the Cornhuskers would rank among the nation's best on offense, but invariably, they would have defensive problems in bowl games.

For one thing, they couldn't deal with their opponent's defense. For another, their own defense was ill-suited to stopping the warm-weather, pass-oriented offenses with which it was confronted.

In case you've forgotten, the lead-in to the Cornhuskers' back-to-back national championships was a frustrating string of seven bowl-game losses. That six of the seven were against Florida State or Miami also helps to explain the problem. But there was a definite defensive component, as well.

In that context, Nebraska will try to win an unprecedented third consecutive national title with what is potentially the best defense in Tom

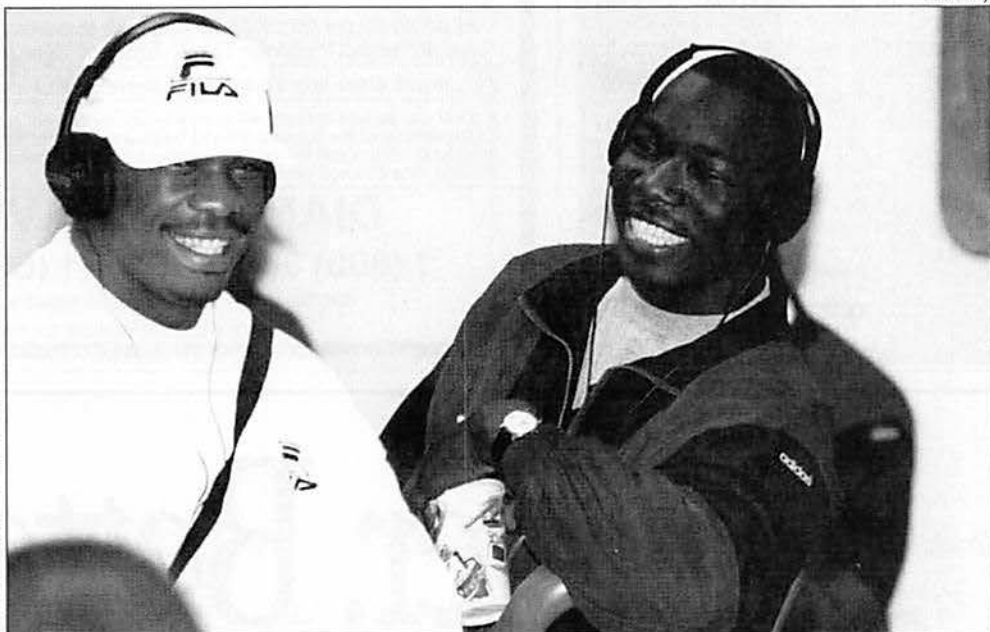
Osborne's 24 seasons as head coach — this will be the 24th. After watching his team play a 20-17 spring game, he acknowledged such defensive potential, in typical, understated fashion. "We may be hard to move on," he said, adding: "I hope so."

Junior Scott Frost, the apparent successor to Tommie Frazier at quar-

Some fans seem to be predisposed to looking beyond the immediate, anyway, which probably helps to explain their passionate interest (obsession might be a better word) in football recruiting.

Those eager to concede a third title to the Cornhuskers because of an exceptional defense would do

Bob Berry



Despite the loss of Tommie Frazier and Lawrence Phillips, this year's offense will be anything but ordinary.

terback, offered a similar assessment of the Cornhusker defense, based on what he saw during the spring. "I don't think our offense has to throw up great numbers because of the way our defense is going to play," Frost said.

Hearing such praise, the temptation might be to skip ahead to a discussion of Nebraska's chances of winning four national championships in a row. After celebrating back-to-back titles, there is a risk of losing perspective, of ignoring just how difficult winning one national championship is.

well to remember that Nebraska didn't win the Big Eight championship in 1984, even though the Cornhuskers ranked first in the nation in both total defense and scoring defense.

Statistically, that was Osborne's best defense. But it was paired with an inconsistent offense, rebuilt without the key players from a team that led the nation in rushing and scoring in 1983. Nebraska was ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press poll in four weeks of the 1984 season, three in September and again in mid-November. But the Cornhuskers lost twice: 17-9 at Syracuse and 17-7 to Oklahoma.

Defense can put a team in position to win a championship. But it's

"WE MAY BE HARD TO MOVE ON."

not enough by itself.

That isn't meant to imply Nebraska's offense will be ordinary in 1996. Quite the contrary. Offensively, the Cornhuskers could be as good as they were last season. They could be even better, which might seem like a stretch, considering they overwhelmed every opponent — including No. 2 Florida.

With good health, Nebraska will be better at running back. Ahman Green, Damon Benning and James Sims all are a year wiser and, it follows, that much better.

Nebraska appears to be solid at fullback. And it has receivers who have demonstrated an ability, and willingness, to block as well as catch. So there shouldn't be a drop-off in either area. That leaves only the quarterback to consider in assessing the Cornhuskers' offensive potential in 1996.

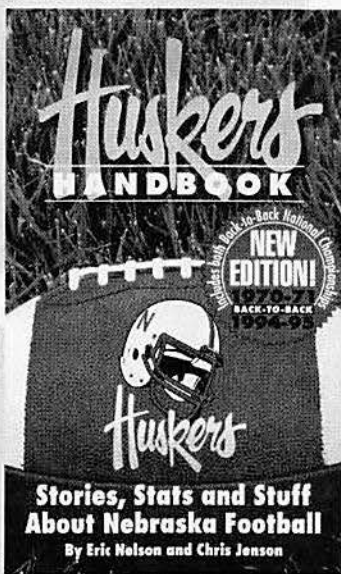
Frost has the physical ability to follow in Frazier's footsteps — assuming he remains ahead of Matt Turman. A quarterback with Turman's understanding of the offense can never be ignored. Still, the greatest uncertainty going into the fall is how the athletically gifted Frost will handle the considerable pressure of replacing Frazier.

The position can be redefined, however. There are no absolutes, even though the tendency is to describe athletes on the basis of those who preceded them. Frazier was once "the next Turner Gill." But the two were unique. So to evaluate Frost as a better or worse quarterback than Frazier is essentially meaningless.

Does all of this add up to a third national championship? It could. But when winning a national title becomes the only acceptable outcome for a season, one game or even one play can be the difference between success and failure. There is no margin for error. Nebraska almost certainly would have to go through the 1996 season undefeated and untied.

With the addition of a Big 12 championship game to be won before the Cornhuskers would be in position to play in the Sugar Bowl, the task becomes even more difficult than last season.

Nebraska could be better when evaluated player-for-player, position-by-position and in the context of its competition. But the only meaningful evaluation will come in retrospect, against an extraordinarily high standard. ■



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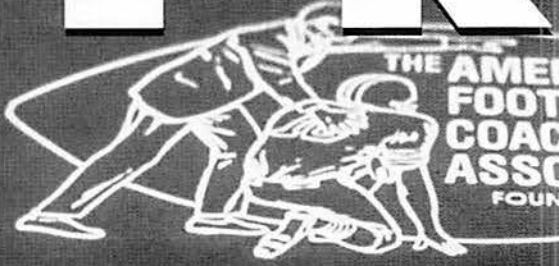
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UNDER PRESSURE



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Pressure? Not any more than usual, according to Tom Osborne.

Even though his program could be the first since The Associated Press initiated its college football rankings in 1936 to win three consecutive national championships, Osborne dismisses the notion that he will feel any additional pressure during his 24th season as Nebraska's head coach.

"Pressure is when you go 22 years and you haven't done it (won a national title)," Osborne said. "It would be nice to have a shot at a third one, and we have a good enough team that we have a chance. But realistically, just the fact you have to win 13 ballgames against a

tough schedule . . . there are a lot of random elements: injuries, officials' calls, weather, a bounce of the football.

"There are a lot of things you have to overcome."

The 59-year-old Osborne is a realist. He knows what his team can control and what it can't, which is why he is preparing for this season like every other. His goal will not be winning a third national championship. Rather, it will be getting the Cornhuskers to play to their potential.

If they do, they very well could extend their winning streak to 38 games, which would be the third-longest in NCAA history, and be national champions for a third year in a row.

The current 25-game winning

streak is the longest in school history. The Cornhusker record for consecutive games without defeat is 34. That streak, which included a 0-0 tie with South Dakota in 1914, began under "Jumbo" Stiehme in 1912 and ended under "Doc" Stewart in 1916.

Nebraska went 32 games without losing from 1969 to 1972.

Only eight other major college football teams have had an opportunity to win three consecutive national championships. The most recent was Alabama, which finished 10-2 and ranked No. 6 in 1980, after winning titles in 1978 and 1979. Alabama, which also won national titles in 1964 and 1965, Nebraska and Oklahoma are the only teams to have accomplished the rare double twice.

Oklahoma won championships

PRESSURE?

**Tom Osborne momentarily
quieted the naysayers by
winning not one, but two
national titles.
Now they want a third.**

By Mike Babcock

under Bud Wilkinson in 1955 and 1956 and again under Barry Switzer in 1974 and 1975. Bob Devaney coached Nebraska to national titles in 1970 and 1971.

The other back-to-back AP champions were Minnesota, in 1940 and 1941; Army in 1944 and 1945; and Notre Dame in 1946 and 1947. The Fighting Irish of coach Frank Leahy dominated the late 1940s, also winning the national championship in 1949, after finishing second to Michigan in 1948. Notre Dame's combined record during those four seasons was 36-0-2. That success was foreshadowed in 1943, when the Fighting Irish went 9-1 and won their first national championship under Leahy. It was a remarkable run in the school's rich football history.

Oklahoma's championships in 1955 and 1956 came during an NCAA-record 47-game winning streak. The Sooners might well have won three national championships during that streak. But even though they were 10-0 in 1954 — and were ranked No. 1 for four weeks early in the season — they finished third in the final AP poll, behind Ohio State and UCLA, both of whom also were undefeated and untied.

Although it didn't win back-to-back national championships, Miami had a comparable contemporary run. From 1986 through 1992, the Hurricanes compiled an 87-9 record under coaches Jimmy Johnson and Dennis Erickson, winning three national titles and finishing No. 2 twice and No. 3 twice.

Nebraska already has earned its

place with such dominant teams, at a time when the NCAA is attempting to legislate parity in Division I-A. In fact, if Byron Bennett's 45-yard field goal kick with one second remaining in the 1994 Orange Bowl game hadn't sailed to the left, the 1996 Cornhuskers would be preparing to play for a fourth consecutive national championship instead of a third.

The 18-16 Orange Bowl game loss to Florida State is the only setback Nebraska has suffered since being upset by Iowa State at Ames, Iowa, on Nov. 14, 1992. The Cornhuskers' combined record the last three seasons is 36-1. "There are a lot of guys who are going to be starting (in 1996) who have never lost a game," said Damon Benning, Nebraska's senior I-back. "That's a big motivator."

**Pressure is when you
go 22 years and you
haven't done it
(win a national title).
— Tom Osborne**



Michael Chow

Rush end Grant Wistrom is among several starters who haven't played in a loss while at Nebraska. The junior from Webb City, Mo., wasn't even a redshirt on the team that lost to Florida State. He was a high school senior, trying to decide between Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Such success contributes to further success by instilling a winning attitude. The Cornhuskers' confidence, particularly on defense, "I think, is up a level from last season," Wistrom said after the spring game. "We weren't that confident going into last (1995) spring. Not this confident, anyway."

The value of that attitude is, "when we have our first-unit defense on the field, we have the feeling and confidence that nobody in the nation can move the ball consistently against us," he said.

Wistrom could sense the success Nebraska has enjoyed the past two seasons when he was a true freshman in 1994, alternating with Donta Jones. "You could see it coming," he

said.

Still, as Osborne's earlier comment points out, many factors involved in winning a national championship are beyond the control of coaches and players. After winning national titles in 1964 and 1965, Alabama went 11-0 — including a 34-7 victory against Nebraska in the Sugar Bowl — and yet wasn't voted a third consecutive championship. The Crimson Tide was No. 3 in the final AP poll for 1966, behind Notre Dame and Michigan State, both of whom finished 9-0-1 (they tied each other).

More recently, of course, Penn State went 12-0 in 1994 and finished second to Nebraska in the national title sweepstakes. History has shown that even going 13-0 wouldn't guarantee the 1996 Cornhuskers a third national championship, although the system established by the bowl alliance has significantly reduced the chances of a team being undefeated and untied and not being No. 1. With the Big Ten and the Pac-10

refusing to participate in the bowl alliance, however, that still could happen.

Winning the national championship doesn't require being undefeated and untied, either. Nebraska wouldn't necessarily have to be perfect in 1996 to earn a third consecutive title. But seven of the last 10 AP national champions have been undefeated and untied — and 41 of 60 all-time.

No team with two or more losses has ever won an AP national championship. And only two champions have had a loss and a tie: Colorado in 1990 and Alabama in 1965. There is little margin for error.

Being in the Big 12 Conference will make winning a third national title more difficult. Nebraska would have to defeat the conference's South Division champion in the first Big 12 playoff game at St. Louis on Dec. 7 in order to be considered for a bid from the Sugar Bowl, the site for what the alliance hopes will be a national championship matchup. The conference title game is as significant as a bowl game, considering what will be at stake. Plus, the Cornhuskers play Colorado in Lincoln on Nov. 29.

The Buffaloes, with quarterback Koy Detmer recovered from the knee injury that ended his junior season early, figure to be Nebraska's top challenger in the Big 12's North Division although Kansas State could again figure in the mix.

The Cornhuskers have a national championship-quality schedule, which includes non-conference home games against Michigan State and Colorado State around a trip to

ATTEMPTING THREE IN A ROW

Eight teams have tried to win a third straight national title and failed. Can Nebraska overcome the hump and make history? Here's a look at how the eight failed during the three-peat attempt and how they finished in the final Associated Press poll.

SCHOOL	TITLE YEARS	FINAL RANKING IN THIRD YEAR	RECORD
Minnesota	1940, 1941	Tied for No. 19 in 1942	5-4
Army	1944, 1945	No. 2 in 1946 to Notre Dame	9-0-1
Notre Dame	1946, 1947	No. 2 in 1948 to Michigan	9-0-1
Oklahoma	1955, 1956	No. 4 in 1957	9-1
Alabama	1964, 1965	No. 3 in 1966	11-0
Nebraska	1970, 1971	No. 4 in 1972	9-2-1
Oklahoma	1974, 1975	No. 5 in 1976	9-2-1
Alabama	1978, 1979	No. 6 in 1980	10-2

Arizona State and inter-divisional Big 12 games at Oklahoma and Texas Tech as well as a Memorial Stadium visit from Baylor.

Nebraska begins Big 12 play with a divisional game at Kansas State. The Wildcats will have an off-week to prepare for Nebraska, after moving their game with Texas Tech to the season-opener.

Three years ago, as Osborne prepared his team for the 1993 season, there was concern that the Nebraska football program had fallen from the nation's elite. The Cornhuskers had lost six bowl games in a row, and they had finished out of the AP Top 10 for four consecutive seasons.

In 1990, they finished out of the Top 20, at No. 24.

Nebraska had ended up No. 14 in 1992, after going 9-3, including a 27-14 loss to Florida State in the Orange Bowl. Osborne said the Cornhuskers played well in the loss. But few believed him.

In retrospect, they should have. Nebraska has lost only once since then.

Now, the Cornhuskers are in a position to make history.

Osborne says the pressure was lifted the season before last. ■

RANKING THE W'S

With 25 wins, Nebraska is currently tied with five teams for the 15th best all-time mark among Division I-A teams.

Remember, these are consecutive victories, not unbeaten streaks, which would include ties.

WINS	SCHOOL	YEARS
47	Oklahoma	1953-57
39	Washington	1908-14
37	Yale	1890-93
37	Yale	1887-89
35	Toledo	1969-71
34	Pennsylvania	1894-96
30	Texas	1968-70
29	Miami (Fla.)	1990-93
29	Michigan	1901-03
28	Alabama	1978-80
28	Oklahoma	1973-75
28	Michigan State	1950-53
26	Cornell	1921-24
26	Michigan	1903-05
25	Nebraska	1994-??
25	Brigham Young	1983-85
25	San Diego State	1965-67
25	Michigan	1946-49
25	Army	1944-46
25	Southern Cal	1931-33

Spring D

Black Shirts Dominate Spring Game Which Was Played With Mixed Emotions

Had he been a spectator rather than a participant he wouldn't have been worried, Ahman Green said after the Nebraska football team's annual spring intrasquad game. Green and the No. 1 offense had struggled on that pleasant April afternoon, averaging less than 3 yards per play against the No. 1 defense.

The Red team, which paired the No. 1 offense and the No. 2 defense, needed four field goals from sophomore Kris Brown — the last with three seconds remaining — to defeat the Whites, 20-17.

The Reds' only touchdown came on an 87-yard punt return by versatile Damon Benning.

Nevertheless, "if I were watching in the stands. I wouldn't be disappointed offensively," Green said. "If we blew through the defense, I think everybody would have been worried, including me."

For the most part, coach Tom Osborne shared Green's opinion. "I was a little disappointed at times that our offense execution wasn't better," he said. "But it's the age-old quandary: Does that mean our offense isn't very good or that our defense is very good? I think it's more of the latter."

"We have a decent offense. We may have an outstanding defense."

That was the theme throughout the 15 days of spring practice, which ended with the sadness of the death, in the crash of a small plane two days before the Red-White game, of Brook Berringer.

What would have been a preview of the team that will attempt to make college football history by winning a third consecutive national championship became a tearful farewell to Berringer (see page 110), not only from his former coaches and teammates but also from a record spring game crowd of 48,659.

Once under way, the game offered a distraction from the profound sense of loss most felt but couldn't satisfactorily express. "We know Brook would have wanted us to play today," said Benning.

Defense dominated on both sides. The combined total offense was only 440 yards. The teams punted 12 times between them, averaging nearly 46 yards per punt. The Reds' 20 points were the fewest by the winning team in the spring game since 1978. The last time there were fewer than 37 points in the spring game — there also were 37 points scored in 1993 (29-8) — was 1982, when the Reds won, 24-9.

The No. 1 offense went against the No. 1 defense on eight series, rushing 28 times and gaining a net of 28 yards. "You've got to understand, we were playing against a good defense," Benning said. "It's a lot easier for the defense to make adjustments (in the spring). But my hat is off to the defense."

Scott Frost, who emerged from the spring as the No. 1 quarterback, had 50 yards rushing (on 19 carries) and 44 yards passing. The junior transfer from Stanford was 4-of-14 passing, with one interception. His running was instrumental in setting up the game-winning field goal.

The No. 1 defense, which featured a 12-tackle performance by senior middle linebacker Jon Hesse, was relentless in its pursuit of Frost, and everyone else in red jerseys. But Green didn't seem to be overly concerned. "The No. 1 offense against the No. 1 defense is going to be tough on somebody," he said. ■

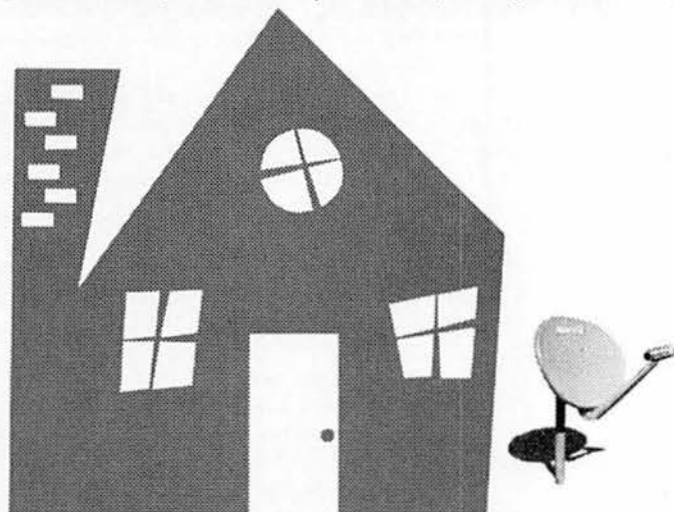
Bob Berry



Damon Benning added the only touchdown for the Red team in its win.

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The contrast between this year's quarterback situation and last year's at Nebraska couldn't be more glaring going into fall camp.

In 1995, Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer performed marvelously in the spring and the fall. Frazier won the starting job before the opening game, and the rest is the stuff history and legends are made of.

Frazier led the Huskers to their second-straight national title, while Berringer waited patiently for another chance.

Berringer, with a likely NFL draft selection in his

future, was killed on April 18, two days before the draft, when the plane he was piloting crashed just north of Lincoln.

Frazier, who finished second in Heisman Trophy balloting last December, has since been hampered by recurring blood-clot problems and was not selected in the April 20 draft.

In the meantime, Nebraska football drives on, and there will be a new player guiding the Big Red Machine in 1996. **Scott Frost**, a 6-foot-3, 215-pound junior transfer from Stanford, has been getting the lion's share of attention since stepping onto campus over a year ago.

As a senior at Wood River High School, Frost made national news with his rifle arm, blazing speed, intelligence and overall athletic ability.

Then Stanford coach Bill Walsh, the former head coach of the San Francisco 49ers, drew attention by

coming to Wood River on a recruiting trip. If that didn't make a big enough headline, the fact that Frost signed with Stanford later on did.

But Walsh resigned his post at Stanford two years ago, and Frost is back in Nebraska.

"There are 22 guys out there for us and hopefully with a team effort, we can accomplish some of the things Tommie was able to accomplish in his career," Frost said. "I feel real comfortable with the offense right now."

Frost, who was forced to sit out last season in accordance with NCAA regulations, was able to practice with the team all year.

Frost saw two seasons of action at quarterback and free safety for Stanford.

As a quarterback, Frost completed 33-of-77 passes for 464 yards with two touchdowns and five interceptions. He also rushed 38 times for 143 yards and four touchdowns.

Now, Frost says, he's ready to take on the Nebraska challenge.

"Lots of guys are asking me about tension and being nervous about this and that," Frost said. "Look, to me, after the two years I spent at Stanford and not playing a lot, and then sitting out last year, there is no tension for me."

"I'm enjoying myself playing out there, and I am ready to play this fall."

Spring practice may not have totally proven that to be true for Frost. In the annual Red-White matchup, Frost completed only 4-of-14 passes for 44 yards and had one ball intercepted.

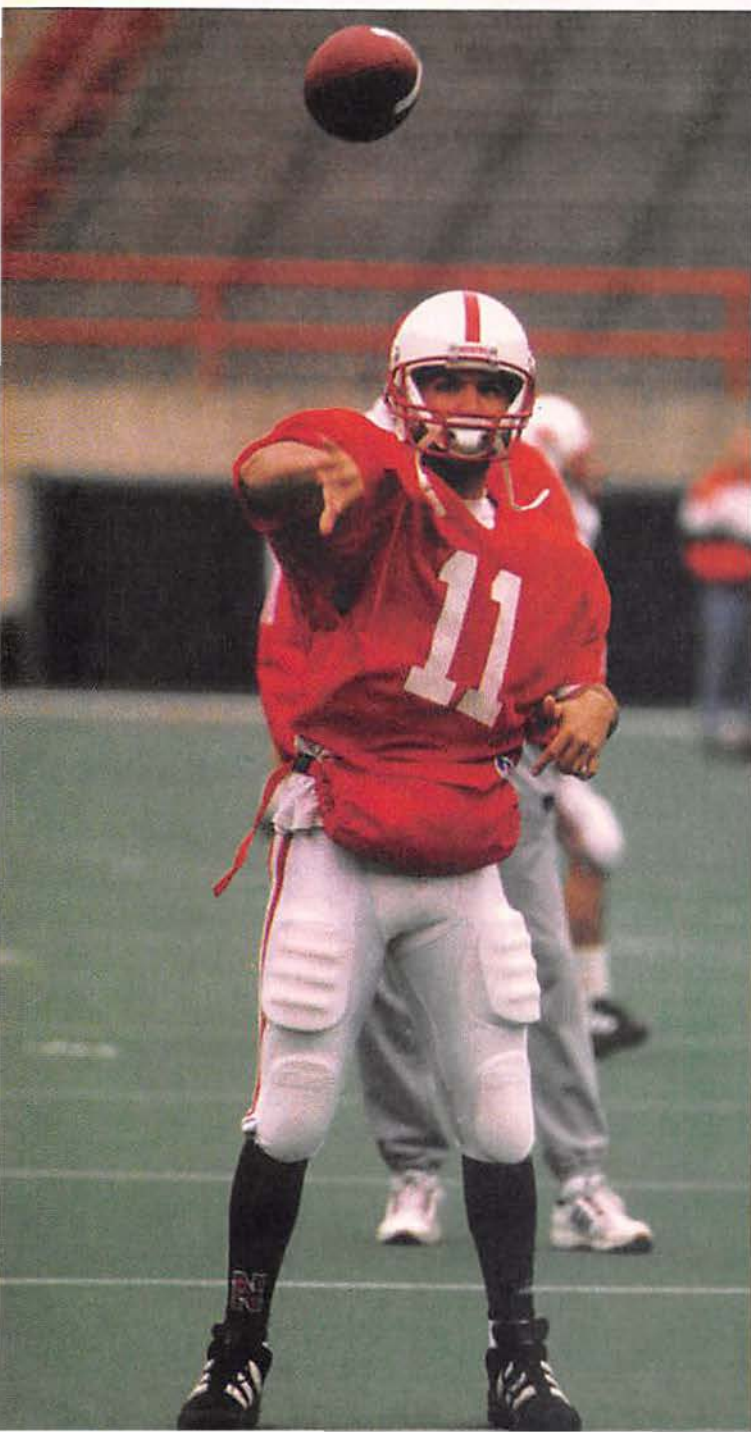
But he was lined up against what could be considered the finest defense in the country — The Nebraska Black Shirts.

"I feel real comfortable with the offense, but I'll tell you what, I'm going to feel real comfortable with that defense on my side next year, too," Frost said. "Hopefully we won't have to face a defense that brings the house like that next year. Those rush ends pin their ears back and come tough on the pass rush and the guys in the middle clog up the run real well. It's tough against them out there."

But even against the No. 1 defense, Frost got even in the end. He led the Red unit (No. 1 offense) on a 15-play, 58-yard drive, that ended with the game-winning field

Matt Turman would like to erase the "backup" label that's followed his name for three years.

Quarterback



goal by place-kicker Kris Brown.

According to coach Tom Osborne, it is Frost's athletic ability and intelligence that allows him to accomplish things like that.

"Scott will be a good runner at quarterback," Osborne said. "He did a good job running and passing in the spring. He had a lot of pressure and a lot of people in his face."

But as Osborne, and every other coach close to the situation points out, Frost still has a long way to go. And he's got plenty of competition.

Matt Turman, a 5-11, 185-pound senior from Wahoo, Neb., backed up Frazier and Berringer in fine fashion for much of the last two seasons.

Turman played in nine games in 1995, but in 1994, he was the Huskers' leader on two different occasions. With Frazier and Berringer both out with injuries, Turman started the second half of the Oklahoma State game and guided the Huskers to a 35-3 win. He also started against Kansas State a week later.

Turman, Frost's teammate in the Spring game, was 3-of-6 passing for 72 yards, including a nifty 59-yard strike to Brendan Holbein in the second quarter.

Two other players who saw action in the spring were sophomore **Monte Christo** and redshirt freshman **Jeff Perino**.

Christo, a Kearney High (Neb.) graduate, has been plagued by injuries since his arrival two years ago.



Jon Waller

Tired of sitting and watching, Frost believes he's ready to lead the Huskers.

Finley, rated as one of the top 10 quarterbacks on *The Dallas Morning News'* Top 100 recruits list, is the only quarterback Nebraska signed last winter.

What may be the most valuable asset Nebraska has at quarterback is the education that five of the six players picked up behind Frazier and Berringer.

Frost says that Berringer, especially, helped him deal with a year away from the limelight.

"I learned patience from Brook," Frost said. "I learned the ability of keeping my head up and keeping a smile no matter what's going on around you." ■

Currently recovering from back surgery, Christo competed well all spring and was 4-of-9 passing for 63 yards in the Spring game. He also threw the only touchdown pass of the contest.

Perino, a 6-2, 195-pounder from Durango, Colo., is recovering from knee surgery and also had a solid spring outing.

The other players who will fill in the quarterback puzzle will be redshirt freshmen **Frankie London** of Lake Charles, La., and **Clint Finley**, a true freshman from Cuero, Texas.

London had shoulder surgery prior to spring ball and missed the drills, but should compete for playing time in the fall.

QUARTERBACK

SCOTT FROST

Quarterback

7

6-3, 215
Junior
Wood River, Neb.
(transfer from Stanford)



Frost emerged from spring drills as the heir apparent to Tommie Frazier, who started the past four years for the Huskers. Frost sat out last season after transferring from Stanford, but had a great spring at Nebraska. A versatile athlete, Frost started four games as a safety at Stanford in 1994 in addition to serving as the backup quarterback.

As a freshman for the Cardinal, he completed 2-of-9 passes and rushed for 63 yards in 15 attempts. As a sophomore, he threw for 464 yards and rushed for 143 yards as a backup.

Coach Tom Osborne on Frost: "Scott's a good thrower with good option ability."

RETURNING QB

Scott Frost, Jr.
Matt Turman, Sr.
Monte Christo, So.
Frankie London, Fr.
Jeff Perino, Fr.

LOST

Tommie Frazier
Brook Berringer

MONTE CHRISTO

Quarterback

9

6-0, 195
Sophomore
Kearney, Neb.

Injuries have kept

Christo from ever getting into serious consideration as a solid backup quarterback. He missed all of spring last year after having lower back disc surgery. Sat out last season after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his knee.

Christo, a walkon, threw for 63 yards in the spring game this year and rushed for another 16.

Osborne on Christo: "He has good speed and pretty good option ability."



MATT TURMAN

Quarterback

11

5-11, 185
Senior
Wahoo, Neb.
(Neumann)



Enters fall camp as the No. 2 quarterback behind Scott Frost, but is the Huskers' most experienced signal-caller. Last season, he played in nine games, rushing for 35 yards and completed 4-of-12 passes for 73 yards and one touchdown.

Turman started one game during the 1994 season when injuries sidelined Tommie Frazier and slowed Brook Berringer. He helped Nebraska beat Kansas State in his only start to keep the team's national championship hopes alive.

Hasn't put up great numbers, but is a guy who won't get a team beat by making bad decisions.

Osborne on Turman: "He knows the system well and is comfortable running or throwing."



I-Back/Fullback

A time has come for Nebraska that most schools dread. The Huskers must replace their best running back. But a situation that is a nightmare for many schools, creates excitement for Nebraska fans, and plenty of solid competition for the NU players.

Lawrence Phillips, a first-round draft pick of the St. Louis Rams, ended his controversial career at Nebraska after his junior season in 1995, opening the door for a slew of running backs just waiting to stake their claim to one of Nebraska's most high-profile positions.

Ahman Green, a 6-foot-0, 210-pound flyer from Omaha (Central), tops the list after a successful freshman campaign in 1995.

Green rushed for 1,086 yards on 141 carries, a new freshman record for I-backs, while filling in for Phillips, who was suspended for six games. Green had five 100-yard rushing games and scored 13 rushing touchdowns.

According to Nebraska assistant head coach and running backs coach Frank Solich, the Huskers are eager to begin a new era in the backfield.

"I think we've got a good handle on what we will have going into the fall," Solich said. "Some of these guys have extensive playing time. We have three I-backs with good experience, and as a whole, I feel very good about the talent level at I-back and fullback."

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The signing of *Parade* All-American I-back **DeAngelo Evans** of Wichita, Kan.; fullback **Willie Miller** of Omaha; and **Robert Pollard** of Orange Park, Fla., gives the Huskers even more depth going into fall practice.

But at Nebraska this year, experience may prevail at both running back positions.

Along with Green, senior **Damon Benning**, and sophomore **James Sims** saw plenty of action in 1995. They should be the ones vying for the majority of playing time behind Green.

"For the most part, I think we got a good start with the running backs this spring," Solich said. "With the injuries we had, it was a little tough, but this is really an excellent group of football players."

Green went through spring practice with a pulled quadricep muscle, while Benning injured his shoulder, and Sims and fullback **Brian Schuster** both suffered through nagging hamstring problems.

"It was nothing major, but with only 15 days to practice in the spring, it's tough to evaluate everybody anyway. That was valuable time that was lost."

At fullback, Schuster, a 5-11, 225-pound senior from Fullerton, Neb., was the leading candidate going into spring practice, but his hamstring problems may have evened the playing field. Schuster rushed for 246 yards on 28 carries last year while backing up graduated starter Jeff Makovicka.

Joel Makovicka, a 5-11, 230-pound sophomore, and **Billy Legate**, a 5-11,

"We definitely have the talent to remain where we're at as far as performance is concerned."

Frank Solich
Assistant Head Coach

215 pound sophomore, will join Miller in climbing the fullback chain of command.

Whatever happens at both positions, one thing is clear — expectations will be high, like usual.

"The expectations are always high, but that's fine," Solich said. "We feel we have good players all the time, and they will stay that way if they continue to work hard all the time."

"But we definitely have the talent to remain where we're at as far as performance is concerned. I know the fans are excited about what we have coming in and they expect a lot. But every team has to develop its own style and chemistry. Sometimes that is tough to do."

Along with style and chemistry goes team unity. The pressure and competitive nature of the running back position at Nebraska is fierce.

But Green says the Huskers handle it well.

"Pressure is usually the amount of pressure I put on myself," Green said. "You all in the media are going to come out and say: 'Nebraska has got this and Nebraska has got these people coming back', but if the pressure is on me, it is placed there by me."

The Huskers notoriously respond to the pressure well, because the internal competition prepares them for it.

injury, a weight control problem, poor grades, or lack of motivation could cause a slip.

"Right now, we're all working hard to bring home another championship as a team," Green said. "We've all discussed it, and we know we have to work hard all summer long and in the fall. We all have to prepare hard for the season." ■

Bob Berry



Bob Berry

Another key thing that the competitive atmosphere breeds is lack of breathing space. The smallest thing can cause a loss of ground in the running back hierarchy at Nebraska. An

The Husker ground attack will take a shot at another national rushing title behind I-back Ahman Green (30) and fullback Brian Schuster (38).

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I-BACK/FULLBACK

AHMAN GREEN

I-Back

30

6-0, 210
Sophomore
Omaha, Neb.
(Central)



Green started six games as a true freshman last season before losing his job to Lawrence Phillips right before the Fiesta Bowl. Green recorded a Nebraska freshman record by rushing for 1,086 yards on 141 carries (a 7.7 yard per attempt average). Also was a threat in the passing game, catching 12 passes for 102 yards and three touchdowns.

Green rushed for a career-high 176 yards against Washington State (his first collegiate start), and duplicated that effort against Iowa State. Green will also contribute as a kick returner.

Last year, he returned four kicks for 71 yards securing his spot as NU's all-purpose leader (114.5 yards per game) after finishing with 1,259.

Assistant coach Frank Solich on Green: "Ahman Green has a lot of game experience. We should be very talented at that position."

DAMON BENNING

I-Back

21

5-11, 210
Senior
Omaha, Neb.
(Northwest)



Started two games last season before a nagging hamstring injury bothered him the rest of the season. The injury forced him to miss two games. He finished the year with 407 yards on 63 carries and four touchdowns. Rushed for a career-high 173 yards on 10 carries against Pacific.

Benning should be the Huskers' top kick returner this season.

Benning alternated at I-back with Clinton Childs as Phillips' backup in 1994. Was the team's fourth-leading rusher that year, gaining 367 yards on 67 carries. He also scored five touchdowns and averaged 5.5 yards per attempt.

RETURNING

IB Ahman Green, So.
Damon Benning, Sr.
James Sims, Jr.

LOST

FB Brian Schuster, Sr.
Joel Makovicka, So.
Billy Legate, So.

JAMES SIMS

I-Back

31

6-1, 215
Junior
Omaha, Neb.
(West Memphis, Ark.)



One of the most athletic Huskers in postseason workouts. Sims, who has timed as well as 4.3 in the 40-yard dash, rushed for 270 yards as the Huskers' fifth I-back in 1995. Rushed for 80 yards against Michigan State on just one carry.

He redshirted in 1994. A 1989 graduate from West Memphis, Ark., Sims rushed for 870 yards as a senior. Following high school, Sims worked in Omaha for a couple of years before enrolling at Nebraska and walking on the team.

BRIAN SCHUSTER

Fullback

28

5-11, 225
Senior
Fullerton, Neb.



Schuster was a backup to starter Jeff Makovicka last season, but solidified his spot atop the depth chart during spring practice.

He played in every game last fall, rushing for 246 yards on 28 carries. He is also a member of the Husker special teams. Schuster was the only player among the top three units to not lose yardage during the season. On the flip side, Schuster is still looking for his first collegiate touchdown.

In 1994, he carried the ball 13 times for 98 yards.

Solich on Schuster: "Brian gained a lot of experience last year and he should take over the position."

JOEL MAKOVICKA

Fullback

45

5-11, 230
Sophomore
Brainard, Neb.
(East Butler)



The younger brother of Jeff Makovicka (who was the Huskers' starting fullback last season), Joel played in every game last fall and carried the ball 22 times for 185 yards. He scored two touchdowns.

Rushed for a season-high 55 yards in the season opener last season at Oklahoma State.

A strong blocker, Makovicka (pronounced MACK-oh-vick-uh) can clean 335, squat 524 and bench press 360 pounds. At East Butler, he rushed for over 3,500 yards and set season and career tackle records as a linebacker.

BILLY LEGATE

Fullback

40

5-11, 215
Sophomore
Elgin, Neb.
(Clearwater)



Enters fall camp listed third on the depth chart at fullback, but was one of the team's best special teams players a year ago after recording seven tackles. Gained just 21 yards on the ground on five attempts. Legate is a walkon who redshirted in 1994.

DEANGELO EVANS

I-Back

5-9, 210
Freshman
Wichita, Kan.
(Collegiate)

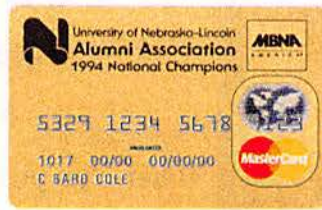


Considered one of the top prep running backs last season, Evans could see early action (like Green did last year) if injuries occur. Evans chose Nebraska over Notre Dame and Penn State. During his high school career, he rushed for 8,473 yards.

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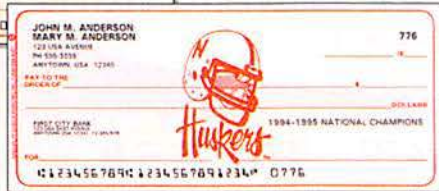
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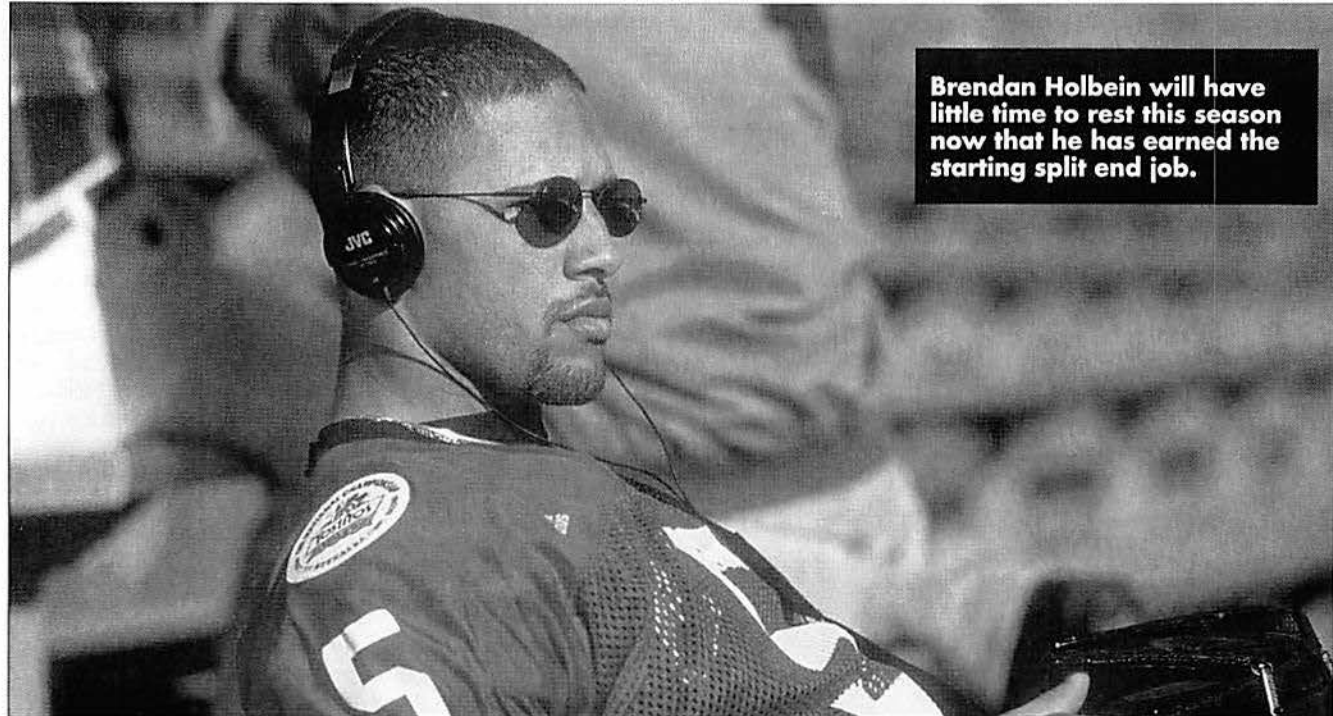
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Brendan Holbein will have little time to rest this season now that he has earned the starting split end job.

There seems to be little doubt that the receiving corps for the 1996 Nebraska Cornhuskers will be able to provide the big play.

The big question, however, according to receivers coach Ron Brown, is whether or not they will be able to provide it consistently.

"I think what you're looking for in the spring and the fall are big play people," Brown said.

"People that you think have the ability to step up and do something outstanding. But you're also looking for consistency."

"There are some young people that have the ability to make a big play, and then they won't show up for another week or so. Once in a blue moon, you'll see some flashes. We're looking for the people who want to show up every day and consistently battle."

No one on the staff is excited about the loss of split end Reggie Baul, wingback Clester Johnson and tight end Mark Gilman to graduation.

Add to this the loss of wingback Riley Washington, who left the team indefinitely for personal reasons, and the pass catching units may be greener than the turf at Memorial Stadium.

But the talent entering and returning may be the finest collection of athletes to run pass patterns for NU.

"We need a lot of repetitions for our young wingbacks and split ends, and we have an excellent corps of young tight ends," Brown said. "This is as good a group as we've had here in terms of talent, but they are just a young group."

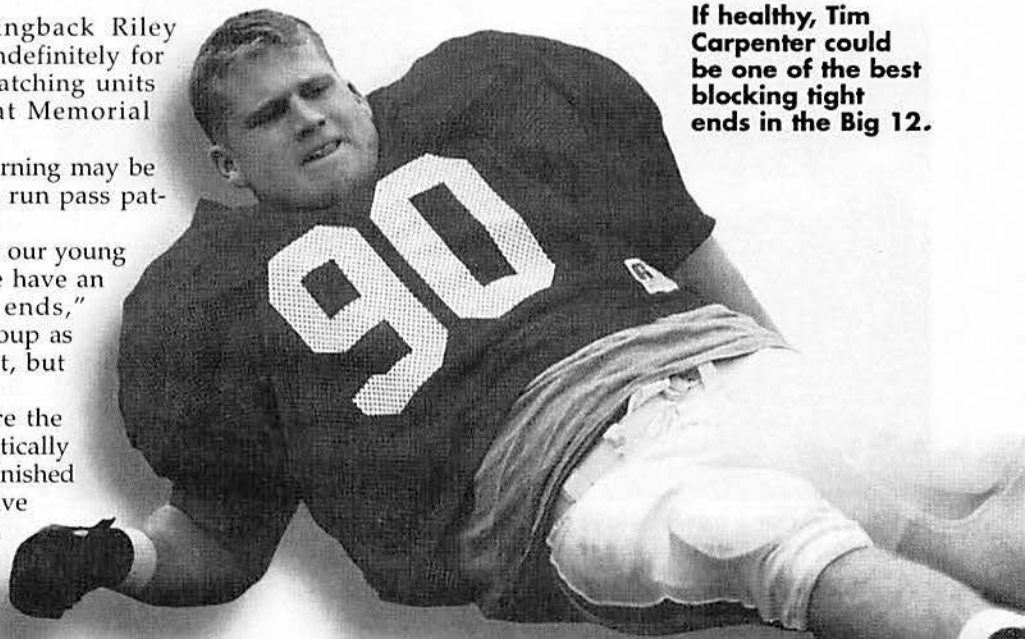
Johnson, Baul and Gilman were the Huskers' top three receivers statistically last season. Combined, the three finished with 927 yards on 55 catches and five touchdowns. Those numbers will have to be replaced in a hurry.

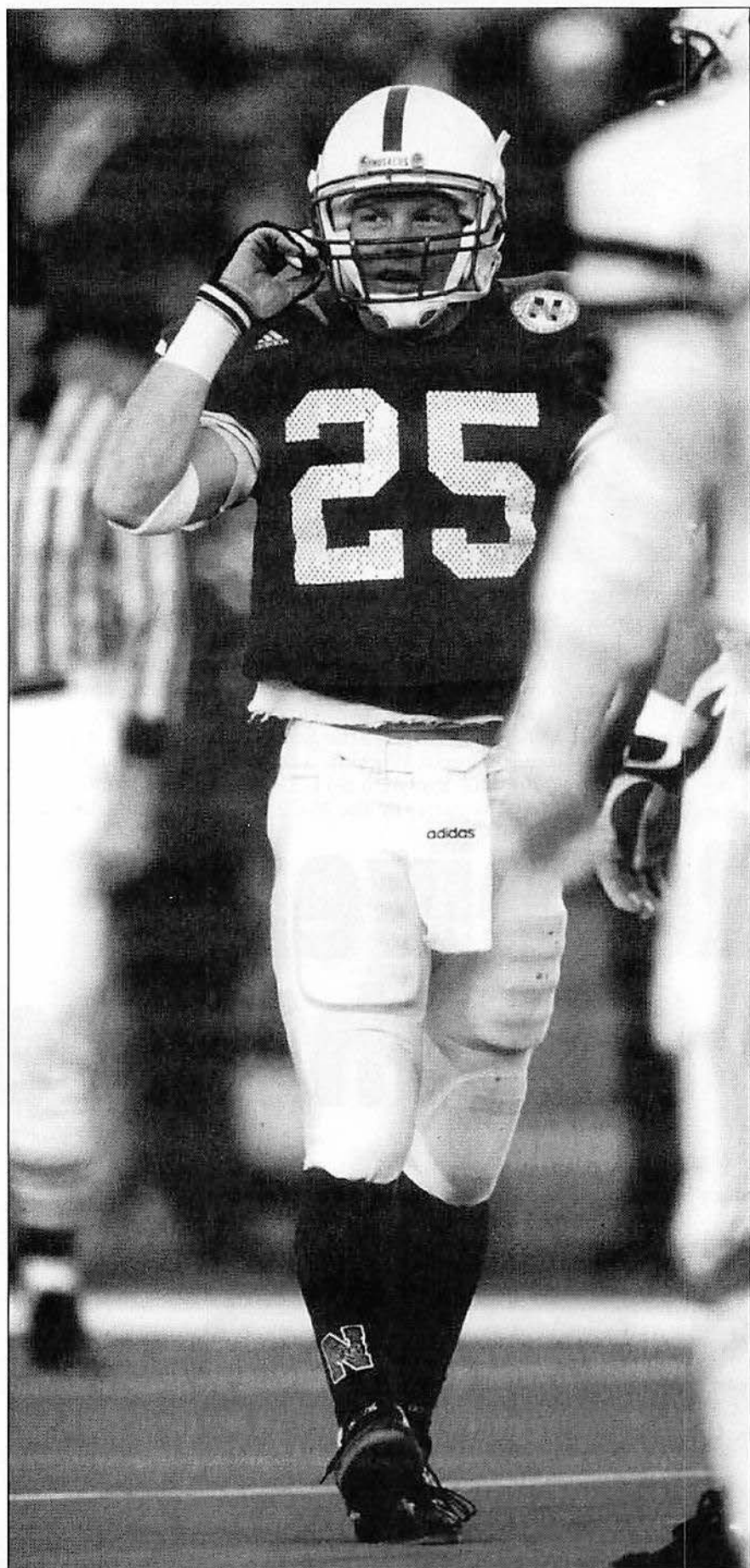
At wingback, **John Vedral**, a 5-foot-11, 205-pound senior from Gregory, S.D., will play a key role in bringing game experience. Vedral, while alternating with Johnson, caught 14 passes for 272 yards and five touchdowns in 1995. He also had a rushing touchdown and added a score on a special teams fumble recovery.

Behind Vedral will be **Sean Wieting**, a 5-9, 190 pound junior, **Shevin Wiggins**, a 5-11, 180 pound sophomore, and **Lance Brown**, a 5-11, 190 pound sophomore. Also, Brown is currently the No. 2 split end behind **Brendan**

Receiver & Tight End

If healthy, Tim Carpenter could be one of the best blocking tight ends in the Big 12.





Holbein.

Wieting and Wiggins sat out '95 as redshirts, but Brown caught two passes for 44 yards, including a 39-yard touchdown reception from Matt Turman against Arizona State.

The split ends are coming in with some seasoning thanks to Holbein, a 5-9, 190-pound senior from Cozad, Neb. Holbein finished with 14 catches for 151 yards and a touchdown while alternating with Baul. Holbein started nine games, averaging 10.8 yards per catch.

Along with Holbein and Brown are 6-4, 205-pound junior **Jeff Lake** and 6-4, 210-pound sophomore **Kenny Cheatham**. Both will provide blazing speed in backup roles.

"All of those guys have good quickness, good running ability, good power and they can block," Brown said. "So it's really a matter of getting them some repetitions. They just haven't seen much play in pressure type situations."

Brown and the rest of the staff also recruited well to pick up ground. The Huskers landed three versatile receivers in the off-season.

J.R. Edwards, a 6-2, 175-pounder from Lincoln, **John Gibson** (6-0, 185) of Papillion, Neb., and **Khari Reynolds** (5-11, 170), from Mays Landing, N.J., may be able to provide depth and help right away.

Reynolds, who has been clocked at 10.5 in the 100 meters, was a *Bluechip Magazine* All-American and a *USA Today* honorable mention All-American for Egg Harbor Township High School.

Gibson was Nebraska's Player of the Year, while Edwards earned All-State honors.

The tight end position will see a bunch of big-play potential in **Tim Carpenter**, **Vershan Jackson**, **Sheldon Jackson**, and **T.J. DeBates**. The first three combined for eight catches and collected only three touchdowns. DeBates redshirted last year.

Carpenter, a 6-3, 250-pound junior, missed spring ball after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery last winter, but should be back at full speed in the fall.

"This group, like the rest of our team, has had a lot of adversity," Brown said. "But what has been a huge part of our football team the last three years is battling back from adversity. Our team has been like a tennis ball. You can squeeze it, but it always bounces back into shape. I think you have to have that to be a championship caliber team." ■

Bob Berry

It's gutsy, hard-nosed players like Jon Vedral who help make NU's receiving corps one of the most well-rounded units in the nation.

RECEIVER/TIGHT END

BRENDAN HOLBEIN

Split End

5

5-9, 190
Senior
Cozad, Neb.



Holbein alternated plays with Reggie Baul a year ago and started nine games. He caught 14 passes for 151 yards (an average of 10.8 yards per catch) and one touchdown. He was also one of the top blockers of all receivers. In 1994, he started five games and saw action in all 13, catching nine passes for 88 yards and scoring two touchdowns.

His first career touchdown came against UCLA in the fourth quarter in 1994 when he hauled in a 9-yard pass from Tommie Frazier in the end zone.

Assistant coach Ron Brown on Holbein: "Holbein is an experienced veteran. Holbein is tenacious and a hard-working player"

JEFF LAKE

Split End

89

6-4, 205
Junior
Columbus, Neb.
(Lakeview)



Lake played in just nine games last season as Nebraska's fourth-team split end. Caught a 7-yard pass in the season-opener against Oklahoma State but didn't get a reception the rest of the season. Saw action in five games in 1994.

Brown on Lake: "Jeff just needs experience and to work on a few phases of his game."

KENNY CHEATHAM

Split End

6

6-4, 210
Sophomore
Phoenix, Ariz.
(So. Mountain)



Missed the last seven games a year ago after separating his shoulder.

RETURNING

SE Brendan Holbein, Sr.
Lance Brown, So.
Jeff Lake, Jr.
Kenny Cheatham, So.

LOST

Reggie Baul

WB

Jon Vedral, Sr.
Shevin Wiggins, So.

Clester Johnson
Jacques Allen

TE

Tim Carpenter, Jr.
Sheldon Jackson, So.
Vershan Jackson, Jr.

Mark Gilman

der. Played in five games and caught four passes for 31 yards and no touchdowns. A versatile athlete, he also received scholarship offers for basketball and track and field.

Brown on Cheatham: "Kenny is a great talent. He could be as good as he wants to be — an All-America type player — and is very physical."

JOHN VEDRAL

Wingback

25

5-11, 205
Senior
Gregory, S.D.



Vedral alternated at wingback with Clester Johnson last season. Had 14 receptions for 272 yards and five touchdowns last season. He also scored when he fell on a fumble in the end zone (versus Kansas State) and added a special team score as well (Kansas). He started one game, but played in all 12.

Vedral also is the Huskers' holder for PATs and field goals.

Caught only one pass in 1994 — a 7-yarder against Pacific — but played in every game, either as a receiver or on special teams. As a special teams player he recorded 11 tackles and proved to be a valuable addition.

SHEVIN WIGGINS

Wingback

29

5-11, 180
Sophomore
Palmetto, Fla.
(Manatee)



Redshirted last season after a standout career at Manatee High

School in Palmetto, Fla. Had a good spring and moved up to second on the depth chart.

TIM CARPENTER

Tight End

90

6-3, 250
Junior
Columbus, Neb.



Missed two games because of a knee injury last fall. Carpenter, a converted fullback, is known more for his ability to block than to catch passes. Last season, as a backup to Mark Gilman, Carpenter caught one pass. He played in eight games in 1994 and also had one reception.

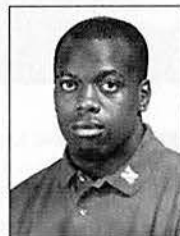
Brown on Carpenter: "Tim is a great blocker, probably one of the best blocking tight ends in the league and is improved as a receiver as well."

SHELDON JACKSON

Tight End

88

6-4, 250
Sophomore
Diamond Bar, Calif.
(Damien)



Jackson is considered the best receiver at the position, and should be in the starting lineup when the Huskers open in a power set. Caught six passes for 52 yards and two touchdowns while playing in 10 games last season.

VERSHAN JACKSON

Tight End

34

6-0, 245
Junior
Omaha, Neb.
(South)



Played in all 12 games last year and caught two passes for 13 yards. One of his receptions was for a touchdown against Kansas. A former fullback, Jackson moved to tight end after the 1994 season. ■



Bob Berry

After earning All-Big Eight honors at left guard last year, Aaron Taylor (67) has been assigned the task of replacing All-American Aaron Graham at center.

Few knew what to expect last year when a new set of bulldozers took over for the famous "Pipeline" offensive front of 1994.

The names Zach Wiegert, Brenden Stai, Aaron Graham, Joel Wilks and Rob Zatechka were household names, and they led Nebraska to its first national title since the 1971 season.

Only Aaron Graham returned for the 1995 campaign, and the new kids were questioned.

The questions were answered in convincing fashion when the line went out and earned its stripes.

Husker foes, be warned, the stripes are still there.

Graham, a consensus All-America, and Steve Ott, are graduated, but gargantuan Aaron Taylor (6-1, 305), Chris Dishman (6-3, 310), Eric Anderson (6-4, 300), Adam Treu (6-6, 300), and John Zatechka (6-2, 290) all earned letters last year with a considerable amount of playing time.

Taylor, who will switch to center from his patented left guard spot, left guard Dishman, and right tackle Anderson are all returning starters from a unit that never allowed a quarter-

back sack during the entire 1995 season.

"Last year we had a goal to come in and be just as good, or better, than the guys before us," Taylor said. "Now our goal is to win three in a row, and the line is up to it. We've got three starters back, we've been in the big game. We'll have to take it to 'em."

The Husker line took hold quickly, and adapted to having several new players in positions they hadn't played before.

"Compared to a year ago, we feel pretty solid about who's going to be where going into the fall," offensive line coach Milt Tenopir said. "So we just may be ahead of the game a little bit there."

Understatement.

It's not just that Nebraska returns a lot of power up front, they return power that no one else in the country could match up with last season.

Consider the facts.

- Nebraska won its 13th

"Last year we had a goal to come in and be just as good, or better, than the guys before us. Now our goal is to win three in a row, and the line is up to it."

Aaron Taylor
Center

Offensive Line

NCAA rushing title by averaging 399.8 net yards per game.

- Only four teams held Nebraska to less than 300 yards rushing: Kansas State (190), Colorado (226), Kansas (289) and Oklahoma (271)

- The Huskers rushed for a whopping 524 yards on 68 attempts against No. 2 Florida in the Tostito's Fiesta Bowl.

- Nebraska had five games with 500 or more net yards rushing during the season.

Now, with Taylor moving to center and Dishman sliding over from his tackle slot to left guard, it appears Tenopir and the Husker staff are merely reloading a powerful weapon.

"I think it's going to take some getting used to because any time you do something like this, it seems new to the players," Tenopir said. "But it's really kind of like a new toy. You get the thing and you see what you can do with it. Aaron enjoyed the switch in the spring. It really provides a new make-up to the line."

The players have bigger things on their mind than a

few line switches.

"It's a positive thing," Dishman said. "The coaches know what they are doing. I'm not about to question a coach that has been here for 23 years. That would be crazy. We just block our techniques and do what we are supposed to do."

According to Taylor, the big picture is the key.

"From here on out, we're focusing on three-peat," Taylor said, referring to a potential third-straight national title.

"Looking into the future, we see that we have to come out and be our best every game, because we know, we're going to have an even bigger target on our backs," he said. "We're going to work hard, and we've made it clear to the young offensive linemen that they're going to be here and work, or they're going to be running. That's just the way it is with us."

Backing up Taylor at center will likely be **Matt Vrzal**, a 6-1, 300-pound senior, and **Josh Heskew**, 6-3, 280. Both earned letters last season.

At right guard, **Matt Hoskinson** (6-1,

280), and **Mike Van Cleave** (6-2, 285), will join Zatechka, while **Brandt Wade** (6-2, 300), and **James Sherman** (6-2, 305), will spell Dishman at left guard.

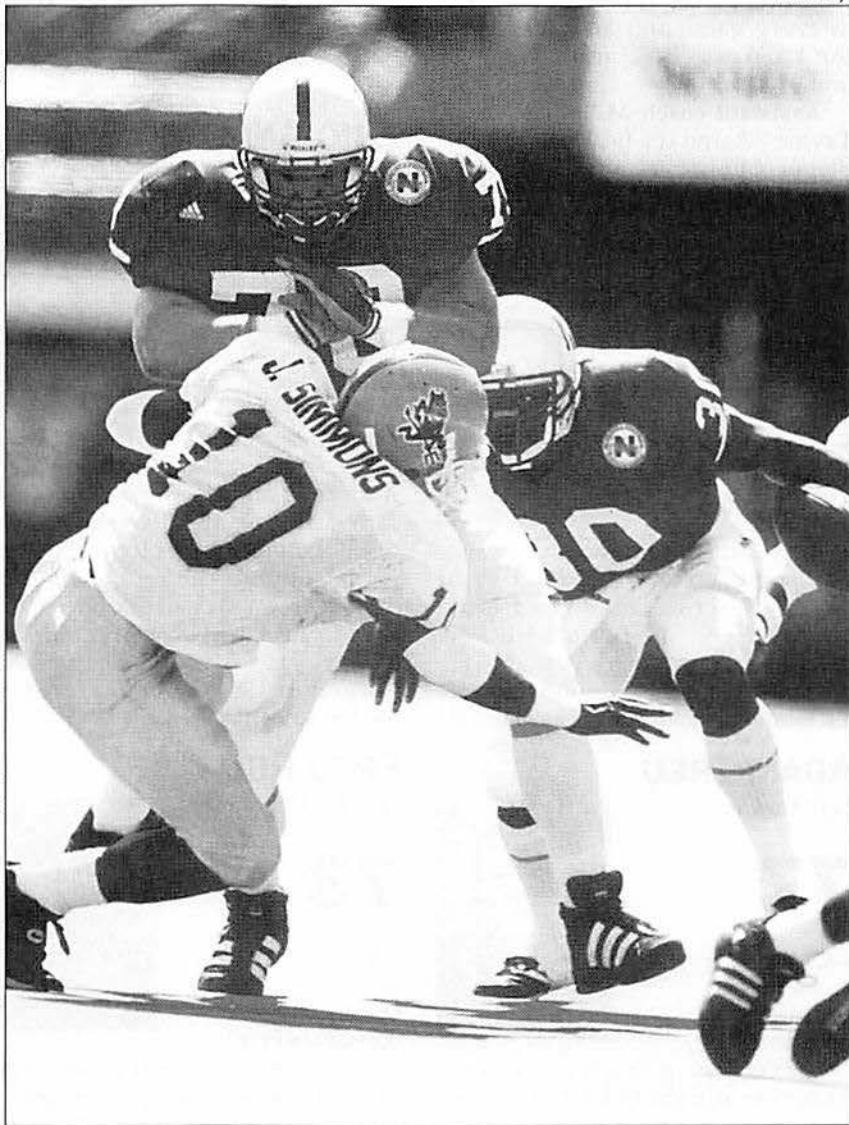
Wade, Hoskinson and Van Cleave all saw enough action to letter last year as well.

Fred Pollack, a 6-4, 305-pound junior from Omaha is the backup left tackle, while **Kory Mikos**, a 6-5, 295 pound senior from Seward, will provide depth at right tackle.

"After that, we're looking at a lot of freshmen kids," Tenopir said. "I can only hope they can come along and give us some help."

Nebraska landed four players who are slated for offensive line work. **Sasho Becvarovski**, a 6-5, 255-pounder from Crown Point, Ind., was an All-State tight end, while **Russ Hochstein**, a 6-4, 240-pounder from Hartington, Neb. and **David Webber**, a 6-3, 275 pounder, were both *Bluechip Magazine* All-Americans. ■

Bob Berry



Behind tackle Eric Anderson, Nebraska rushed for more than 500 yards five times last season.

AARON TAYLOR

Center

67

6-1, 305

Junior

Wichita Falls, Texas
(Rider)



Started all 12 games at left guard last season, but moved to center during the spring to replace All-American pick Aaron Graham. Taylor earned all-conference status last season as he helped the Huskers lead the nation in rushing. Taylor has never played center in a game, but handled the move well during spring drills.

Taylor became a permanent member of the Huskers travel squad midway through the 1994 season. Played in every game and also served on the Huskers' PAT and field goal units.

Assistant coach Milt Tenopir on Taylor: "Aaron is a heck of a football player. He is very savvy as far as football sense goes."

JOSH HESKEW

Center

59

6-3, 280

Junior

Yukon, Okla.
(Mustang)



Was a third-teamer a year ago, but he moved ahead of Matt Vrzal during the spring and is listed as the backup to Aaron Taylor. Heskew played in nine games a year ago. He redshirted in 1993 and didn't play as a freshman because of a knee injury.

ADAM TREU

Left Tackle

77

6-6, 300

Senior

Lincoln, Neb.
(Pius X)



Served as a backup to Eric Anderson at right tackle last season,

RETURNING

LT

Adam Treu, Sr.
Fred Pollack, Jr.

LG

Chris Dishman, Sr.
James Sherman, Fr.

C

Aaron Taylor, Jr.
Josh Heskew, Jr.
Matt Vrzal, Sr.

RG

Jon Zatechka, Jr.
Matt Hoskinson, Jr.
Mike Van Cleave, Jr.

RT

Eric Anderson, Jr.
Kory Mikos, Sr.

LOST

Steve Volin

Aaron Graham

Steve Ott

Brian Nunns

but is expected to be the starter on the left side because Chris Dishman moved to left guard. Saw extensive action in every game last year. Is one of the tallest Huskers.

Came out of nowhere to earn a backup role during spring practice last year. Entering 1993, Treu was barely on the depth chart, but added size and worked his way to second string during the spring.

ERIC ANDERSON

Right Tackle

70

6-4, 300

Junior

Lincoln, Neb.
(Southeast)



Despite playing with a sprained ankle the last half of the season, Anderson started every game and earned first-team All-Big Eight honors in the process. A physical player, Anderson and the rest of the line didn't allow a sack all season.

He played in every game as a reserve to All-American Zach Wiegert in 1994. He also served on the Huskers' PAT unit.

FRED POLLACK

Left Tackle

73

6-4, 305

Junior

Omaha, Neb.
(Creighton Prep)



Saw limited action a year ago, playing in just five games, but is

expected to serve as Adam Treu's backup and should be on the field a lot. Also was a backup in 1994 after sitting out the '93 season as a red-shirt.

KORY MIKOS

Right Tackle

78

6-5, 295

Senior

Seward, Neb.



Backed up Chris Dishman at left tackle a year ago and expected to fill in for Eric Anderson on the right side this year. He played in every game as a sophomore. A walk-on who redshirted in 1992, he played sparingly over the last two seasons. He's also a member of the PAT and field goal squads.

Mikos was a third-team left tackle in 1994, but was moved to the other side once spring practice began.

Has worked hard in the weight room and learned what it means to compete for playing time at Nebraska. Was a member of the Phillips 66 Big Eight Academic Honor Roll.

CHRIS DISHMAN

Left Guard

75

6-3, 310

Senior

Cozad, Neb.



Was an honorable mention All-American last season and a first-team all-conference selection as well. The Huskers most experienced lineman, Dishman moved from tackle to left guard during spring practice. At tackle, he started every game last year.

Dishman saw plenty of action in 1994 serving as a reserve to Rob Zatechka. Played in every game during the regular season. Was a backup in 1993, playing in eight games during the regular season. He suited up for the 1994 Orange Bowl, but did not see action.

A big, strong kid, Dishman will be playing in the NFL next year. His football skills are exceptional.

JON ZATECHKA

Right Guard

64

6-2, 290
Junior
Lincoln, Neb.
(East)

Backed up Steve Ott last season, but moved to the top of the depth chart before spring ball began at right guard. He gained valuable experience a year ago, playing in all 12 games. He also saw action in 1994. Will be the second member of his family to start on the Huskers' offensive line this decade. His older brother, Rob Zatechka, was a two-year starter in 1993 and '94.



MATT HOSKINSON

Right Guard

62

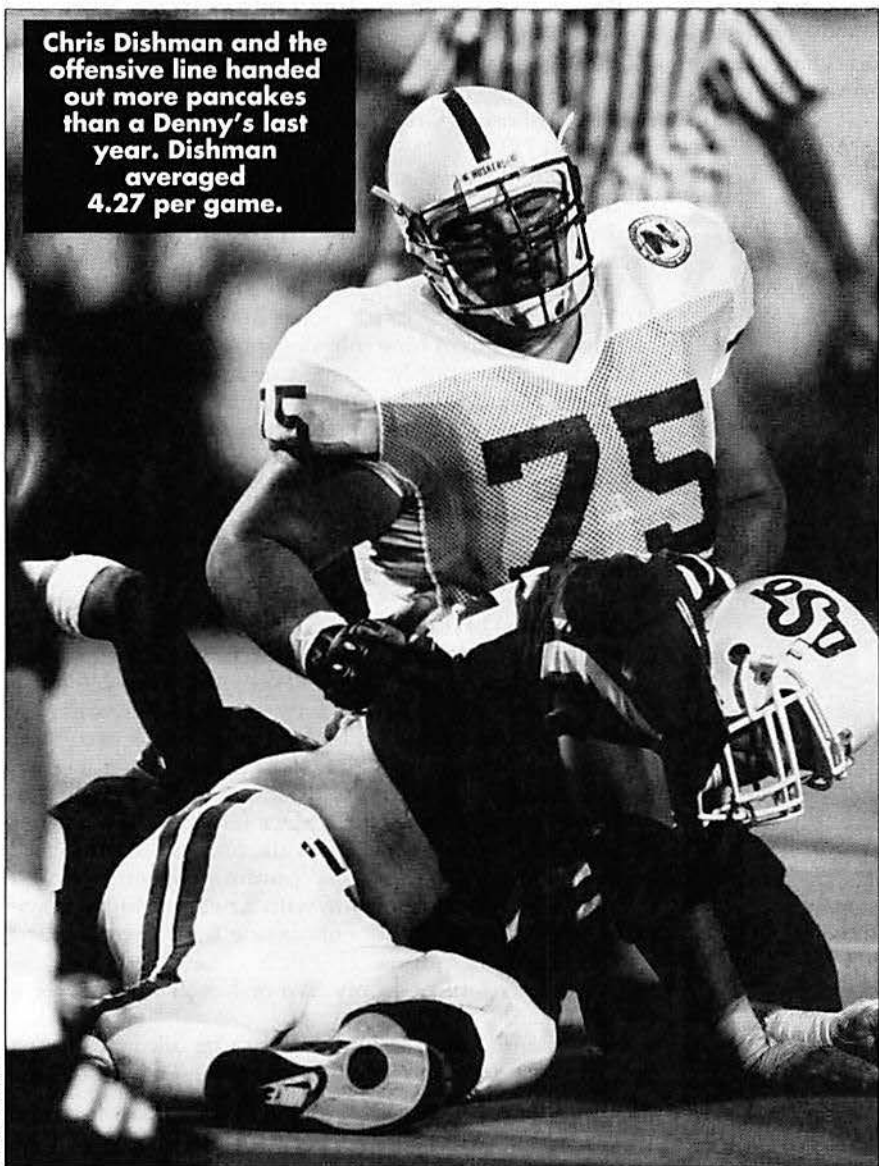
6-1, 280
Junior
Battle Creek, Neb.

Was the No. 3 guard last year, but should get even more playing time this year. Saw action in seven games in 1995. Redshirted in 1993.

Hoskinson is another lineman who was unheard of heading into spring practice last year. Hoskinson worked his way up the depth chart and entered fall drills as Aaron Taylor's backup. ■



Chris Dishman and the offensive line handed out more pancakes than a Denny's last year. Dishman averaged 4.27 per game.



Harry Lentz, Jr.

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Late in the third quarter of Nebraska's spring game, **Damon Benning** fielded a 46-yard punt by Brian Morro and returned it 87 yards for the victorious Red team's only touchdown. Just minutes later, Benning returned another punt 38 yards to set up the third of **Kris Brown's** four field goals.

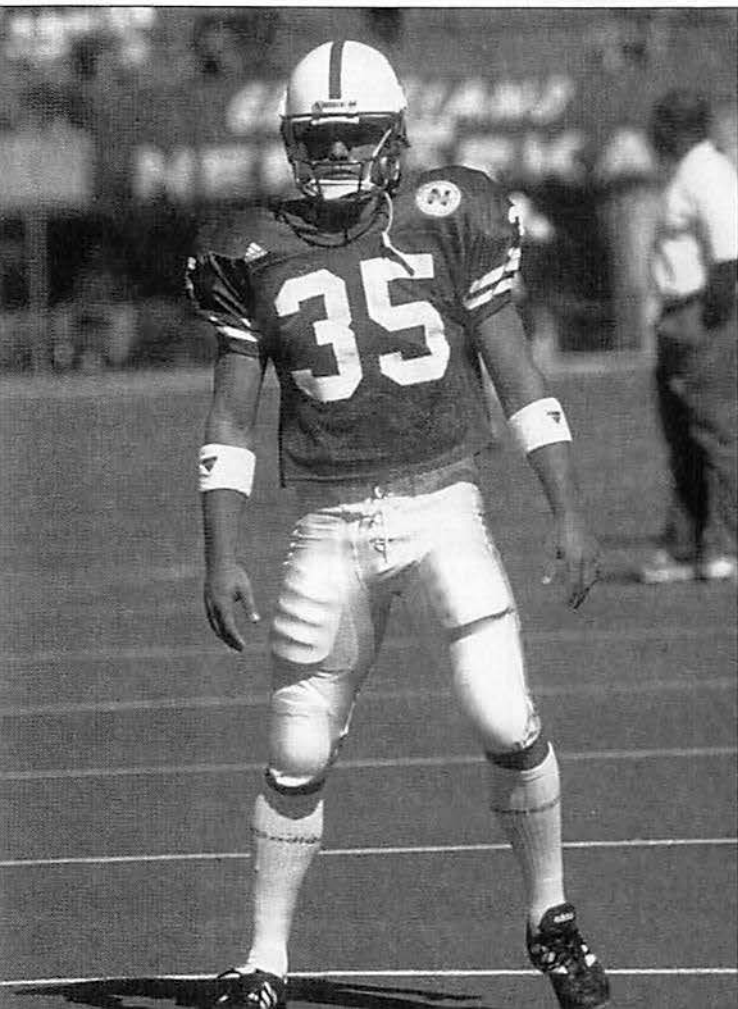
"I take a lot of pride in my special-teams play," Benning said after the Reds' 20-17 victory. "I've always said that there's no quicker way to turn a game around than special teams."

That attitude has made Benning a special player dur-

Special Teams

ing his Cornhusker career. In addition to playing I-back, the senior from Omaha has made significant contributions to special teams. Benning has done whatever the coaches would allow him to do, covering as well as returning kickoffs and punts.

He will continue to do so this season, which means Nebraska should be solid in those areas, even if he's a backup rather than the No. 1 punt or kickoff returner.



The post-spring depth chart listed him first among the kickoff returners and second to senior **Mike Fullman** among the punt returners.

Fullman, a cornerback who was hampered by a groin injury throughout spring practice, ranked first in the Big Eight and 10th in the nation in punt returns last season, averaging 13.6 yards per return. The longest of his 21 punt returns was a 79-yarder for a touchdown against Kansas State.

Coach Tom Osborne emphasizes special teams and kicking, and those areas have been important in the Cornhuskers winning back-to-back national championships. Last season, "we probably won the kicking game in most of our games," said Osborne. And there shouldn't be a dropoff in 1996.

Now a sophomore, Brown should benefit from a year's maturity, after leading the Big Eight in scoring as a true freshman. He scored 97 points, the most ever by a Cornhusker freshman and a school single-season record by a kicker. Brown made 58-of-61 extra point kicks and 13-of-16 field goals. He "did everything you could ask of a kicker, and more than you could expect from a freshman," Osborne said.

Brown's .813 field goal percentage was a Nebraska single-season record.

He was two extra-points short of Rich Sanger's school record — Sanger was 60-of-64 in 1971. And he was one field goal short of Gregg Barrios' single-season record of 14, set in 1990.

Brown had a solid spring, culminating with field goals of 26, 25, 23 and 25 yards in the Red-White game. His goal, he said, was to improve his ability to kick under pressure, to be more focused.

Handling pressure hasn't been a problem for Brown. He missed the first extra point kick he attempted at Nebraska, less than nine minutes into the opener against Oklahoma State. But he seemed unaffected by the miss, kicking a 24-yard field goal two minutes into the second quarter. He also was successful on his second extra-point kick in the opener and would make 31 in a row before missing again.

Brown showed his resilience again in the Fiesta Bowl victory. After his first extra-point kick was blocked, he came back to kick field goals of 26 and 24 yards late in the first half.

Brown, one of only three true freshmen to play for the Cornhuskers last season, kicked three field goals against Michigan State, Colorado and Oklahoma. He was 7-of-9 from 30 yards or more. His longest was a 47-yarder. A high school quarterback, he also completed a two-point conversion pass to fullback Brian Schuster, as well as kicking two field goals in the Washington State game.

Brown allayed Nebraska's place-kicking concerns last season. And **Jesse Kosch**, a walk-on from Columbus, Neb., eased the Cornhuskers' punting concerns. Kosch averaged 40.3 yards per punt, with a net punting average of 39.9. He pinned opponents inside their own 20-yard line on 11 of his 27 punts.

Opponents returned only five of Kosch's punts, for a net of 12 yards.

Brown and Kosch, a junior, won't be allowed to rest on their success in 1995, however. Junior **Ted Retzlaff**, a

Place-kicker Kris Brown set the Nebraska scoring record for a freshman with 97 points last year.

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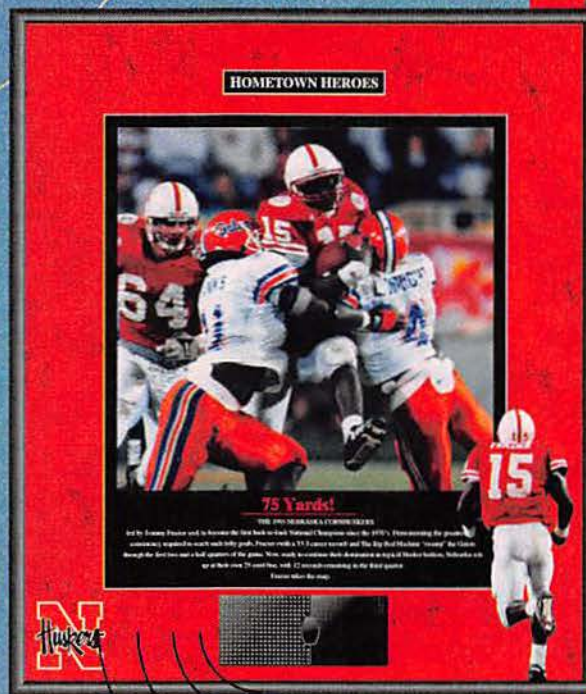
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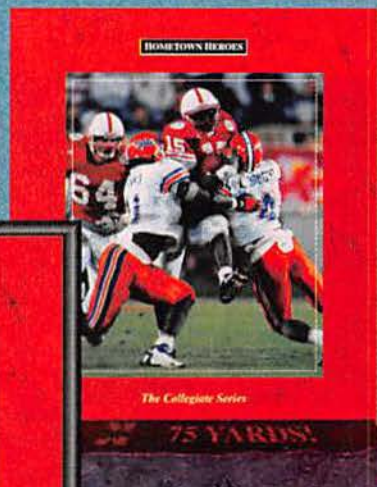
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walk-on from Waverly, Neb., who was 11-of-11 on extra-point kicks last season, will again be Brown's backup. And **Bill Lafleur**, a walk-on from Norfolk, Neb., pushed Kosch in the spring.

With Brown and Kosch, "we feel confident," said kickers coach Dan Young.

Senior offensive tackle **Adam Treu** and junior outside linebacker will go into the fall as the top two deep-snap-pers, replacing the departed Aaron Graham. Senior wingback **Jon Vedral** against will be the No. 1 holder for placements, with senior quarterback Matt Turman as a back-up for the job.

The play of Nebraska's special teams might have been overlooked last season, given the decisive way in which the Cornhuskers won 12 games. Kosch didn't punt even once in the Iowa State game.

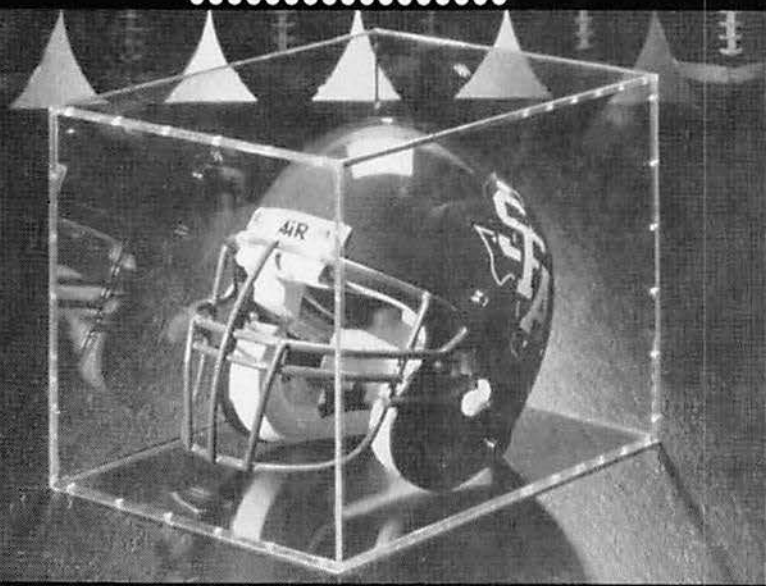
There's no denying their importance, however. Consider Nebraska's 49-25 victory against Kansas State. The Wildcats came to Lincoln with a 6-0 record, a No. 8 national ranking and the nation's best defense. And they limited Nebraska to season lows of 190 yards rushing and 338 yards of total offense.

But Nebraska got off to a fast start, scoring first on Fullman's 79-yard punt return, which included a crushing, blind-side block from Cornhusker outside linebacker Mike Rucker.

The play of Nebraska's special teams also contributed to a fast start in a 41-3 victory against No. 10-ranked Kansas at Lawrence, Kan., late in the season, when Vedral recovered a Kansas fumble, on an attempted punt return, in the end zone for the Cornhuskers' first score.

It was just like Benning said after the spring game. ■

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KICKER PUNTER

KRIS BROWN
Place-kicker

35

5-10, 200
Sophomore
Southlake, Texas
(Carroll)



The true freshman was a stable force for Nebraska as he kicked off and handled PATs and field goals. Brown set a school class record with 97 points (also the most ever by a kicker). He hit 58-of-61 PATs and hit 13-of-16 field goal attempts. He added two field goals in the Fiesta Bowl.

Three times last year he made three field goals in a game.

JESSE KOSCH
Punter

19

6-0, 185
Junior
Columbus, Neb.
(Scotus)



Replaced Darin Erstad last fall and picked up where the baseball All-American left off. He averaged 40.3 yards in 27 punts, and had a 39.9 net punting average. He played in every game but one, when the Huskers didn't have to punt against Iowa State. His long was a 74-yarder against Arizona State.

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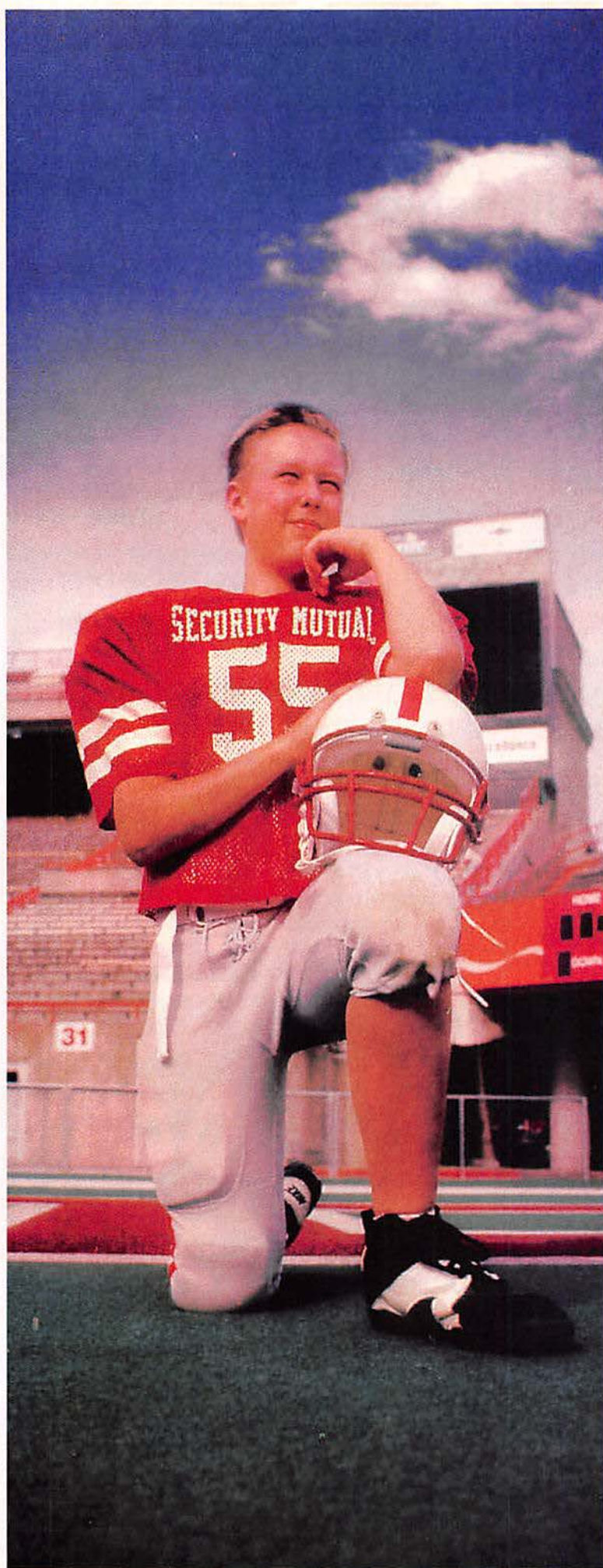
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Shipping/Handling					
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	8-29			Ball St.		
	8-31	Texas Tech	Washington St.		@ Texas	
	9-7	Wyoming	Indiana St.	@ Colorado St.		Michigan St.
	9-14	@ Iowa	Cincinnati	Michigan	@ TCU	Memphis
	9-21	Northern Iowa	@ Rice		Clemson	@ Arizona St.
	9-28	Missouri	@ Texas A&M	@ Utah	@ Iowa St.	Colorado St.
	10-5	Nebraska		@ Oklahoma	@ SMU	@ Kansas St.
	10-12	Texas A&M	@ Missouri	Oklahoma St.	Texas Tech	Kansas St.
	10-19	@ Oklahoma St.	@ Texas A&M	@ Kansas	Colorado	@ Texas Tech
	10-26	@ Baylor	Oklahoma	Texas	@ Nebraska	Oklahoma St.
	11-2	Kansas	@ Missouri	@ Iowa St.	Colorado	@ Oklahoma
	11-9	@ Colorado	@ Kansas	Iowa St.	Kansas St.	@ Nebraska
	11-16	Nebraska	@ Colorado	Kansas St.	Texas	@ Baylor
	11-23	@ Kansas St.	Iowa St.	@ Missouri	Kansas	
	11-28					
	11-29		@ Nebraska			Colorado

SOUTH	Baylor	Texas A&M	Texas Tech	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma	Texas
	8-24	@ BYU				
	8-31		@ Kansas St.	SW Missouri St.		Missouri
	9-7	@ Louisiana Tech	*Oklahoma St.	*Texas Tech	TCU	New Mexico St.
	9-14	@ Louisville	@ SW Louisiana	Tulsa		
	9-21	Oregon St.	North Texas	@ Georgia	Utah St.	@ San Diego St.
	9-28		Colorado	Utah St.	Tulsa	@ Virginia
	10-5	@ Texas Tech	Louisiana Tech	Baylor	@ Texas	Kansas
	10-12	@ Nebraska	@ Iowa St.	@ Kansas	@ Colorado	**Texas
	10-19	Oklahoma	Kansas St.	Nebraska	Iowa St.	@ Baylor
	10-26	Iowa St.	Texas Tech	@ Texas A&M	@ Missouri	@ Kansas St.
	11-2	@ Texas	@ Oklahoma St.		Texas A&M	Nebraska
	11-9	Texas A&M	@ Baylor	Texas	Oklahoma	@ Oklahoma St.
	11-16	Missouri	Oklahoma	SW Louisiana	@ Texas A&M	@ Kansas
	11-23	@ Oklahoma St.	@ Oklahoma	Baylor	Texas Tech	
	11-28					
	11-29	@ Texas				Texas A&M

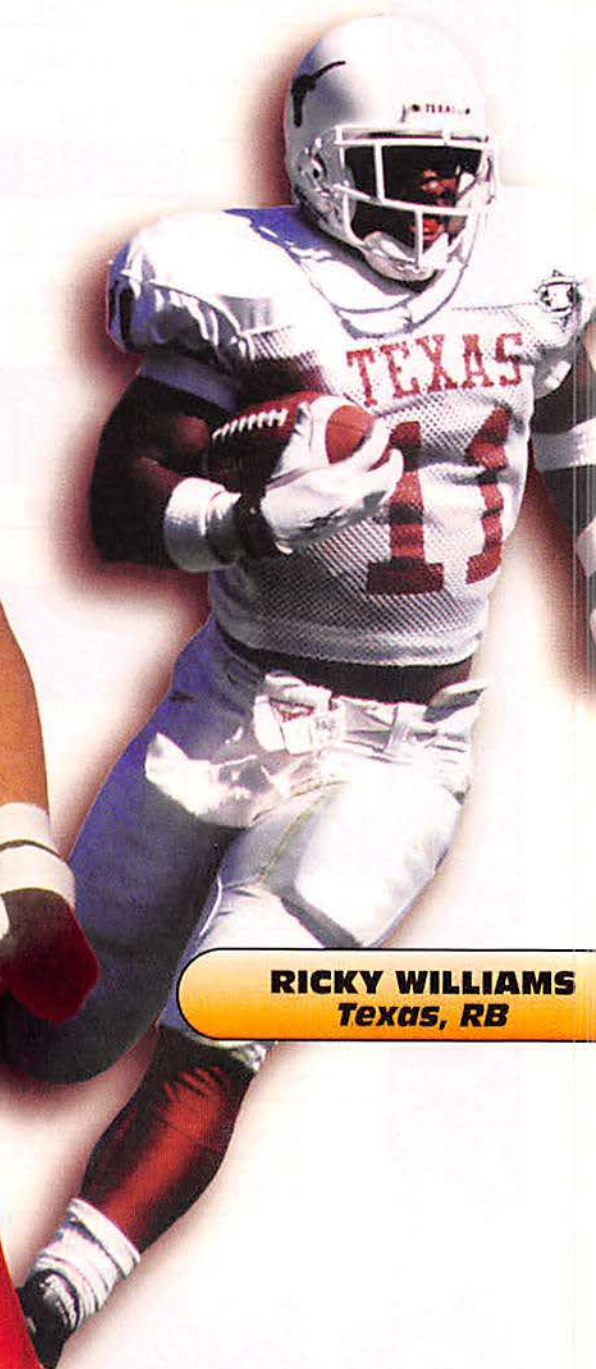
* - Indicates at Texas Stadium (Irving, Texas)

** - Indicates at Cotton Bowl (Dallas, Texas)

WHO CAN DE



GRANT WISTROM
Nebraska, RE



RICKY WILLIAMS
Texas, RB

THRONE

NEBRASKA?

Perhaps Only A Team From The Rugged Big 12 Conference Can

Texas refused to sign Big 12 Conference football television contracts worth more than \$100 million until the issue of freshman eligibility for academic partial and non-qualifiers was resolved.

And without a satisfactory resolution to the matter, Texas Athletic Director DeLoss Dodds said the Longhorns would have no other choice but to consider membership in the Pac-10.

Dodds wasn't making an idle threat. Texas has had a standing offer to join the Pac-10, as has Colorado. So, the reasoning went, if the Longhorns bolted from the Big 12, the Buffaloes might follow.

Despite that possibility, Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne, whose position on partial and non-qualifiers differed from that of Texas, reportedly said: "Go ahead and go to the Pac-10."

It never came to that, of course. The conference membership voted to establish freshman eligibility rules excluding academic non-qualifiers and strictly limiting the admission of partial qualifiers. The vote on freshman eligibility was nearly unanimous, 11-1, the same as the vote creating a Big 12 football championship game between the winners of the conference's North and South Divisions.

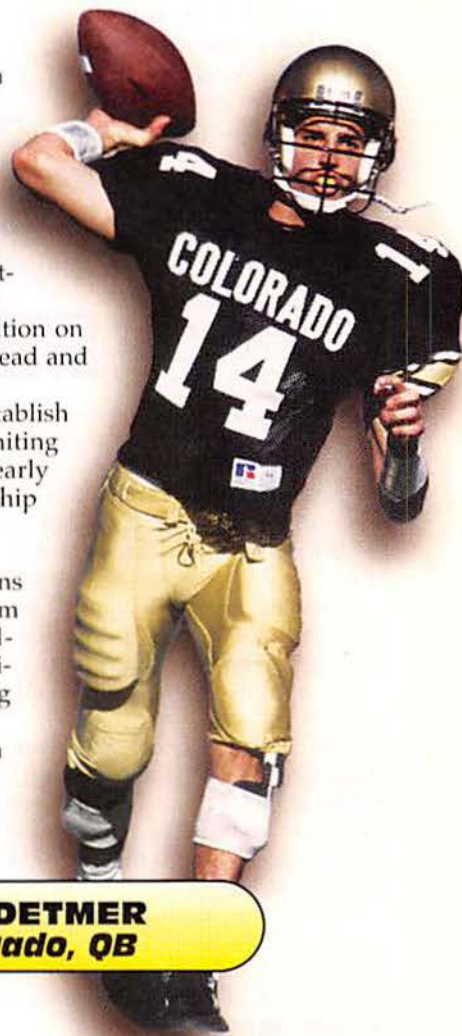
The lone dissenting vote, in both cases, was cast by Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers were frustrated by many of the administrative decisions establishing guidelines for the new conference, formed by all eight schools from the Big Eight and four schools from the Southwest Conference. In mid-December, Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said: "You know this originally was the four Texas schools joining the Big Eight and accepting the Big Eight rules..."

By then, however, it was obvious — as it probably should have been from the beginning — that the structure of the Big 12 Conference would be markedly different from that of the Big Eight.

The Big 12 marriage was one of convenience. No one could deny that.

Graham Spanier, the chancellor at Nebraska when the formation of the new conference was announced (he has since gone to Penn State), acknowledged as much in March of 1994. "The Big Eight is in a vulnerable position," he said. "The Southwest Conference is even more vulnerable."



KOY DETMER
Colorado, QB

Compromise was necessary. Steve Hatchell, the final commissioner of the Southwest Conference (who also worked in the Big Eight office), was chosen as Big 12 commissioner, with conference headquarters located in Dallas, where the Southwest Conference office had been.

It would be easy to conclude that the Texas schools were taking control. But the process was democratic. Each institution had one vote. So even as a group, even if they had wanted to, the four Texas schools weren't in a position to dictate policy — except if there were real concern that the Longhorns would join the Pac-10 if they didn't get their way regarding initial eligibility requirements.

In any case, the league motto now should be: We're all in this together.

The first Big 12 football season is at-hand. Disputes aside, an outstanding conference is ready to begin play, in the sport responsible for its formation. Big 12 football has much to recommend it, including the two-time defending national champion in Nebraska and the nation's leading rusher of a year ago in Iowa State's Troy Davis. "This is the strongest football conference in the United States," Kansas State coach Bill Snyder said last spring, qualifying his assessment with an "at this point in time."

Snyder's team will play Texas Tech in the first Big 12 football game on Aug. 31 in Manhattan, Kan. The game will be televised to the nation by ABC. But even scheduling that first game wasn't easy.

The original plan was that Kansas State and Texas A&M would open the Big 12 season at College Station, Texas, on Aug. 31. Snyder, however, declined to move his team's Oct. 19 game with the Aggies, preferring the home game against Texas Tech, originally scheduled to be played on Sept. 28.

One of the reasons was, Kansas State's record at home during the 1990s is 32-4-1. Another, no doubt, was that Texas A&M will be among the strongest teams in the Big 12's South Division.

In fact, the Aggies' game against Texas at Austin on Nov. 29 could decide the South Division champion, just as the Colorado-Nebraska game

at Lincoln that same day very well could determine the North Division champion. Those games were scheduled then for that reason. Taking such predictions a step further, Nebraska and Texas could resolve their philosophical differences

regarding freshman eligibility in the first Big 12 playoff at the Trans



BILL SNYDER'S KSU SQUAD

JUMP-STARTS BIG 12 PLAY

AGAINST TECH

World Dome in St. Louis on Dec. 7.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. More about those predictions later. We were discussing Kansas State's reasons for wanting to play Texas Tech rather than Texas A&M to kickoff the Big 12 season. By moving the Texas Tech game, the Wildcats will have an off-week to prepare for a key North Division game against Nebraska on Oct. 5. The Cornhuskers must visit KSU Stadium.

Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes had his reasons for agreeing to move the Red Raiders' game at Kansas State to the beginning of the season. The national television exposure is good, and "we had a run in late October and early November . . . (against) five teams in the (final Associated Press) Top 15."

Kansas State would have been the fifth opponent in a six-game stretch, on six consecutive Saturdays, beginning with a conference opener against Baylor, road games against Kansas and Texas A&M, and home games against Nebraska and Texas.

Kansas State, one of four Big Eight teams to win 10 or more games in 1995, finished 10-2 and ranked No. 7 by The Associated Press. Texas Tech was 9-3 and ranked No. 23 by the AP. The game will showcase two of the top players in the Big 12: Kansas State's Chris Canty and Tech's Byron Hanspard.

Canty, a junior cornerback from Voorhees, N.J., was a consensus All-American, a unanimous first-team All-Big Eight pick by the AP and one of three finalists for the Jim Thorpe Award. Canty returns punts, and Snyder also plans to use him as a wide receiver, possibly 10 to 15 plays a game.

Hanspard, a junior from DeSoto, Texas, led the Southwest Conference in rushing and scoring last season. He ran for 1,374 yards, the second-highest total by a sophomore in SWC history, and scored 18 touchdowns to earn consensus first-team all-conference recognition and All-America honorable mention from the United Press International.

Hanspard also led the Red Raiders in pass receiving. Like Canty, he is versatile. In addition to being an outstanding tailback, he is an ordained Pentecostal minister.

Although Texas Tech and Kansas State officially open Big 12 play, they must share some of that distinction with Texas and Missouri, who also play on Aug. 31 at Austin. Kickoff for the Texas Tech-Kansas State game is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. The Texas-Missouri game is set for 6 p.m.

The game will be one of four at night for Missouri in 1996, including two at home. The Tigers erected permanent lights at Memorial Stadium/Don Faurot Field.

Memorial Stadium in Austin also will have a new look for the new conference. Texas will play its home games on natural grass for the first time since 1968. Prescription Athletic Turf cost the Longhorns \$1.25 mil-

lion. "I think we will have the fastest natural turf in the country," said coach John Mackovic.

It will probably seem that way, at least, with a Longhorn offense that includes junior quarterback James Brown, the Southwest Conference Offensive Player of the Year last season, and a running back tandem of senior Shon Mitchell and sophomore Ricky Williams, who rushed for a combined 2,089 yards.

Missouri will counter with an attack featuring junior tailback Brock Olivo.

With those games as a lead-in, the Big 12 will move toward determining a champion that will represent the conference in the Bowl Alliance, which includes, in order of selection this season: the Sugar Bowl, the Orange Bowl and the Fiesta Bowl. A second conference team also could participate in the Bowl Alliance as an at-large selection, depending on its final regular-season ranking.

In addition, the Big 12 has agreements with the Cotton Bowl, Holiday Bowl, Alamo Bowl, Aloha Bowl and Copper Bowl. So there will be plenty of post-season incentives to drive the divisional races.

Nebraska, which won the last five Big Eight championships (including the last four outright) as well as its back-to-back national championships, has to be the favorite to win not only the North Division but also the first Big 12 title. The Cornhuskers will rely on a defense that should rank among the nation's best, featuring linebackers Jared Tomich and Terrell Farley and rover Mike Minter.

The considerable task of replacing Tommie Frazier at quarterback falls to junior Scott Frost, a transfer from Stanford.

Colorado, which regularly matches Nebraska in talent, is hoping to ride the strong right arm of a healthy Koy Detmer to a divisional title. Detmer, a senior, is coming off reconstructive knee surgery. He could be the best quarterback in the North Division — and, possibly, in the conference.

Detmer has outstanding receivers, among them senior Rae Carruth who has run the 40-yard dash in a remarkable 4.17 seconds, and a trio of quality running backs at his disposal. He also has a rugged defense, built around linebacker Matt Russell, to pro-

vide him the ball in favorable field position.

Kansas State, mentioned earlier, will have its third starting quarterback in as many seasons. But senior Brian Kavanagh came off the bench to throw for 242 yards and four touchdowns in a 54-21 Holiday Bowl victory against Colorado State, evidence that he's capable of handling such a responsibility.

Kansas also is replacing a quarterback. Senior Ben Rutz, who spent his first two seasons at Nebraska, will be that replacement, assuming he recovers fully from the knee injury that sidelined him last spring. Senior June Henley is a versatile running back. And the Jayhawks' defense should improve with the return from injuries of junior safety Tony Blevins and senior linebacker Ronnie Ward.

Missouri and Iowa State

will battle to avoid the North Division cellar.

Texas gets the nod in the South Division, but only slightly. The Longhorns have the talent to edge out Texas A&M. If Brown doesn't want to hand off or pitch the ball to Mitchell or Williams, he can throw it to senior wide receiver Mike Adams. Brown will operate behind a line featuring senior guard Dan Neil, who, like Adams, was a consensus first-team All-Southwest Conference selection last season. The Longhorn defense is built around senior cornerback Bryant Westbrook and junior noseguard Chris Akins.

Texas has a more taxing non-conference schedule than the Aggies, traveling to Virginia and playing Notre Dame in Austin. That could take a toll on the Longhorns. Or it could make them better.

Texas A&M again should have a solid defense, featuring all-conference end Brandon Mitchell, outside linebacker Keith Mitchell, who had a remarkable 13 quarterback sacks last season, and inside linebacker Dat Nguyen, the first freshman ever to lead the Aggies in tackles. Nguyen was credited with 94 tackles, just four fewer than the school single-season record, held by All-American Ed Simonini.

A&M could be better offensively under the direction of multi-talented quarterback Brannndon Stewart, who transferred from Tennessee after splitting time with Peyton Manning as a freshman. Senior Calvin Collins anchors the line in front of Stewart, with Sirr Parker and D'Andre Hardeman running behind it.

Texas Tech will rely on Hanspard and junior quarterback Zebbie Lethridge, who has started for two seasons, on offense. Junior end Tony Daniels returns after sitting out last season with a knee injury to bolster the Red Raider defense. Junior free safety Dane Johnson tied for third in the SWC in pass interceptions last season, with



DAT NGUYEN
Texas A&M, LB

**DEFENSIVELY, THE
AGGIES ARE THE
SOUTH'S BEST**

four. Johnson also is an outstanding punt returner.

Baylor's offense, like Tech's, depends on a multi-talented tailback, Jerod Douglas. The junior from Converse, Texas, rushed for 1,114 yards and broke the school single-season record for all-purpose yardage, with 1,594, a year ago to earn consensus first-team all-conference recognition.

The Bears will be young. Several true freshmen could be playing quickly, including quarterback Odell

James.

Intrastate rivals Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, the Big Eight's contribution to the South Division, likely will scrap with each other to avoid the cellar. The Sooners will have to be in good shape and remain healthy if they are to be serious contenders with Texas Tech and Baylor for third in the South. Despite the enthusiasm of a new head coach in John Blake, Oklahoma lacks the depth to take on a schedule that includes inter-divisional games against Nebraska, Kansas and Kansas State in Manhattan.

When the Big 12 was formed, Nebraska wanted to preserve its rivalry with Oklahoma. Although

the game won't be played every season, the Cornhuskers were able to keep Oklahoma on their schedule for the first two years.

It won't be the same with nearly a month of the season remaining. But that's the price of progress. Everyone in the Big 12 has had to pay a little to earn a lot. The haggling between administrators will continue. The coaches and players are ready to step forward, at last. ■



ANDRE RICHARDSON
Oklahoma State, RB

**OSU IS LOOKING
TO MAKE IT
TWO STRAIGHT
OVER OU**



BARON TANNER
Oklahoma, DT

ALL-BIG 12 PRESEASON TEAM

NORTH SOUTH

OFFENSE

PLAYER	SCHOOL	CL.	POS.	PLAYER	SCHOOL	CL.
Koy Detmer	Colorado	Sr.	QB	James Brown	Texas	Jr.
Troy Davis	Iowa St.	Jr.	RB	Shon Mitchell	Texas	Sr.
Ahman Green	Nebraska	So.	RB	Byron Hanspard	Texas Tech	Sr.
Tim Kohn	Iowa St.	Sr.	T	David Davis	Baylor	Sr.
Chris Naeole	Colorado	Sr.	G	Calvin Collins	Texas A&M	Sr.
Chris Appel	Missouri	Sr.	C	Ryan Fiebliger	Texas	Jr.
Chris Dishman	Nebraska	Sr.	G	Dan Neil	Texas	Sr.
Eric Anderson	Nebraska	Jr.	T	Derek Leinen	Okla. St.	Sr.
Matt Lepsis	Colorado	Sr.	TE	Stephen Alexander	Oklahoma	Jr.
Kevin Lockett	Kansas St.	Sr.	WR	Mike Adams	Texas	Sr.
Rae Carruth	Colorado	Sr.	WR	Albert Connell	Texas A&M	Sr.
Kris Brown	Nebraska	So.	PK	Phil Dawson	Texas	Jr.

DEFENSE

PLAYER	SCHOOL	CL.	POS.	PLAYER	SCHOOL	CL.
Nyle Wiren	Kansas St.	Sr.	DL	Donnie Embra	Baylor	Sr.
Greg Jones	Colorado	Sr.	DL	Brandon Mitchell	Texas A&M	Sr.
Jared Tomich	Nebraska	Sr.	OLB	Keith Mitchell	Texas A&M	Sr.
Grant Wistrom	Nebraska	Jr.	OLB	Broderick Simpson	Oklahoma	Sr.
Matt Russell	Colorado	Sr.	LB	Tyrell Peters	Oklahoma	Sr.
Travis Ochs	Missouri	So.	LB	Tyson King	Texas	Sr.
Terrell Farley	Nebraska	Sr.	LB	Dat Nguyen	Texas A&M	So.
DeMontie Cross	Missouri	Sr.	DB	Chris Carter	Texas	Sr.
Mike Minter	Nebraska	Sr.	DB	Anthony Fogle	Oklahoma	Sr.
Joe Gordon	Kansas St.	Sr.	DB	Bryant Westbrook	Texas	Sr.
Chris Canty	Kansas St.	Jr.	DB	R.W. McQuarters	Okla. St.	So.
Marc Harris	Iowa St.	Sr.	P	Mark Schultis	Texas	Jr.

NORTH

1. NEBRASKA
2. COLORADO
3. KANSAS ST.
4. KANSAS
5. IOWA ST.
6. MISSOURI

SOUTH

1. TEXAS
2. TEXAS A&M
3. TEXAS TECH
4. BAYLOR
5. OKLAHOMA
6. OKLA. ST.

**BIG 12
CHAMPIONSHIP
GAME**

TEXAS VS. NEBRASKA

BIG 12 CHAMP

NEBRASKA

Title Turmoil

The Big 12 title game raises concerns and could cost the loser a Tier 1 Bowl, but it will increase the size of everyone's bank account • By Stephen Caldwell

The Big 12's football championship game may one day cost the league a national title. It may wreck an otherwise perfect season for one team, sending its players, coaches and fans off to some "who-cares" bowl to play against some "who-cares" opponent. And it may draw critical reviews for the unfairness of it all.

Such are the inherent risks of competition.

But if the Big 12's title game follows the pattern set by the Southeastern Conference, there won't be many losers from the annual showdown — not even, in most cases, the team that loses the game.

The SEC, after four years with a title game to decide it's champion, has drawn its share of criticism and flirted with some on-field disasters. But the bottom line is that the game has become too profitable to drop from the schedule despite the risks.

The primary risk, of course, is that an undefeated team will lose in the league championship game, thus costing it (and the league) a shot at the national championship and all the glory (and money) that playing for No. 1 would bring.

Nebraska fans might fret the most about this possibility. But schools that traditionally finish in the middle to the bottom of the pack have the most to lose. Pity the school that pulls a Northwestern-like regular season, only to see its once-in-a-half-century chance at a national title eaten alive because it couldn't beat Nebraska or Texas or Colorado or Texas A&M twice in the same year.

The SEC has survived such hazards rather well. The SEC title game so far has avoided a rematch of a regular-season game. The only Cinderella team to make the game — Arkansas — had no shot at a national championship. And only once in four games has a team lost a chance at finishing No. 1 in the country.

Alabama was undefeated when it played a 9-1-1 Florida team in 1994. The Gators led 17-10 at the half, then fell behind 23-17. But Danny Wuerffel led his team on an 80-yard touchdown drive in the fourth quarter that gave Florida a 24-23 victory.

The other three games, however, went to form. Alabama won the first game, 28-21, earning a chance to beat Miami in the Sugar Bowl for the national title. And neither team figured in the national title picture in the 1993 game, won by Florida, 28-13.

At that point, officials were more concerned that the excitement might wear thin without some new blood than they were with the thought of an undefeated team falling off its pedestal. But Arkansas won the SEC West in 1995 and lost to Florida, 34-3, leaving it to Nebraska to ruin the Gators' national title hopes.

Exactly how the game will turn out when the win-

ners of the Big 12's two divisions meet Dec. 7 in St. Louis can't be predicted. But the newly expanded conference can expect a huge lift in its bank accounts, and that will make winners of everyone.

The SEC Championship Game, which has a contract with ABC through the year 2000, grosses more than \$5.5 million each year. The payoff for the 1993 game was \$407,397 to each of the 12 teams and the league office — nearly twice what schools received as their cut from the SEC basketball tournament that year and slightly more than they received as their share of the NCAA tournament pie.

Knowing each SEC school can count on at least \$400,000 a year from the game no doubt helps lessen the sting for the loser.

The game is a big moneymaker. And it will be a big game in the Big 12, which figures to start the 1996 season with as many as four teams in the top 10.

Chris Carroll



Florida has won three of the four SEC title games, but has only played for the national title once.

The SEC's game, held in Birmingham in 1992-93 and in Atlanta in 1993-94, has sold out for three of four years (the 1993 game drew ONLY 76,345) and consistently provides ABC with one of its highest-rated games of the season.

The 1994 game drew a 10.5 rating — 3.4 points higher than the average game during the season and the highest for an ABC game, including bowls, since 1991. It was enough to cause ABC to move the game to primetime beginning last season.

But the championship game isn't perfect. It's an expensive trip for fans, who may have only one week's notice to book airfare and lodging and who may just as soon save their money for a bowl trip.

The risk of losing a chance for a national championship is legitimate and unavoidable. But at least the game itself will always be a success when the teams have so much to lose. ■



BAYLOR

BY RUSTY BURSON

**Running back
Jerod Douglas gained
1,594 all-purpose
yards in 1995, the
best total in
Baylor history.**

In April, Baylor University broke a tradition that dates back to 1845, the year when the world's largest Baptist institution of higher learning was founded. To the chagrin of some elder administrators, but to the delight of most of the school's 12,000 students, Baylor actually held the first-ever dance on campus.

"Times are changing," first-year Baylor president and CEO Dr. Robert Sloan said of the monumental event. "And it's time for us as a university to prepare to move into the 21st century."

Perhaps there's a correlation between the administration's new direction and the Baylor football program's commitment to a new offensive philosophy. Whether they are following the administration's lead or not, the Bears finally seem ready — and equipped — to install a modern offensive philosophy and move away from the dark ages of a purely option/run-oriented approach.

Of course, Baylor has actually made a move toward the "forward pass" many times before. But for the first time since Cody Carlson left the school a decade ago, the

Bears may actually have a quarterback on campus (Odell James) who will keep opposing defensive coordinators up late at night and who will strike fear into the hearts of defensive backs.

Now that's truly a cause for dancing on the streets of the Baylor campus.

"Having an 'open' offense is kind of a relative term," said Baylor coach Chuck Reedy, who is entering his seventh season at the school and his fourth as the Bears' head coach. "We threw the ball an average of 26 times a game last year. A lot of people would consider that open. That's more than we threw it all the time I've been here and (during the 12 years Reedy spent as an assistant) at Clemson.

"But obviously, we haven't been very effective in our passing game. We need much better execution. So, I'd say we will continue to feature a fairly open offense, but hopefully, we'll be more effective and maybe not so predictable in certain areas."

Last year, Baylor starting quarterback Jeff Watson averaged just 137.1 yards per game passing and threw more interceptions (six) than touchdowns (five). Overall,

the Bears ranked seventh in the now-defunct Southwest Conference in passing offense. Only Rice, which runs a modified version of the Wishbone, had a more ineffective passing game in the SWC.

But that could all change with the arrival of James, who was considered by many recruiting experts to be the nation's top high school quarterback prospect last February. And although he is only a freshman, James is already a Big 12 headliner.

In a highly publicized recruiting battle, the 6-4, 205-pounder from Aldine (MacArthur), Texas, chose Baylor over two-time defending national champion Nebraska. Cornhuskers coach Tom Osborne had coveted James' tremendous running and passing abilities, and many experts simply assumed James would sign with the Huskers and become the next Tommie Frazier.

James had even attended Nebraska football camps as a youth. It seemed like the perfect match.

Fortunately for Baylor, however, Nebraska seemed too perfect for James' liking.

"Nebraska's great, and they're going to be great for a long time," said James, who produced 5,838 total yards of offense and 78 touchdowns in 32 high school games. "But I like being the underdog. If I went to Nebraska

and we won a national championship, it really wouldn't be that big of a deal.

"I wanted to go to a school where I could really make a name for myself and turn the whole thing around. Baylor is the underdog, and that pumps me up."

Reedy, of course, is diplomatic in his assessment of the starting quarterback situation, saying, "There are no guarantees for Odell or any of our other quarterbacks. It should be a great battle, and I expect Odell to compete strongly for the starting position."

On paper, it may indeed be viewed as a "battle" when practice starts in August. But in reality, the race for the starting quarterback position is proba-

bly the equivalent of world-class sprinter Michael Johnson challenging the Dallas Cowboys' offensive line to a race. They're all athletes, but they're hardly in the same class.

In all likelihood, the only thing that could possibly keep James out of the starting lineup is insufficient test scores. His grades in his core classes are satisfactory, but at press time, he was one point shy of scoring the minimum requirement on his ACT. But James and Reedy are

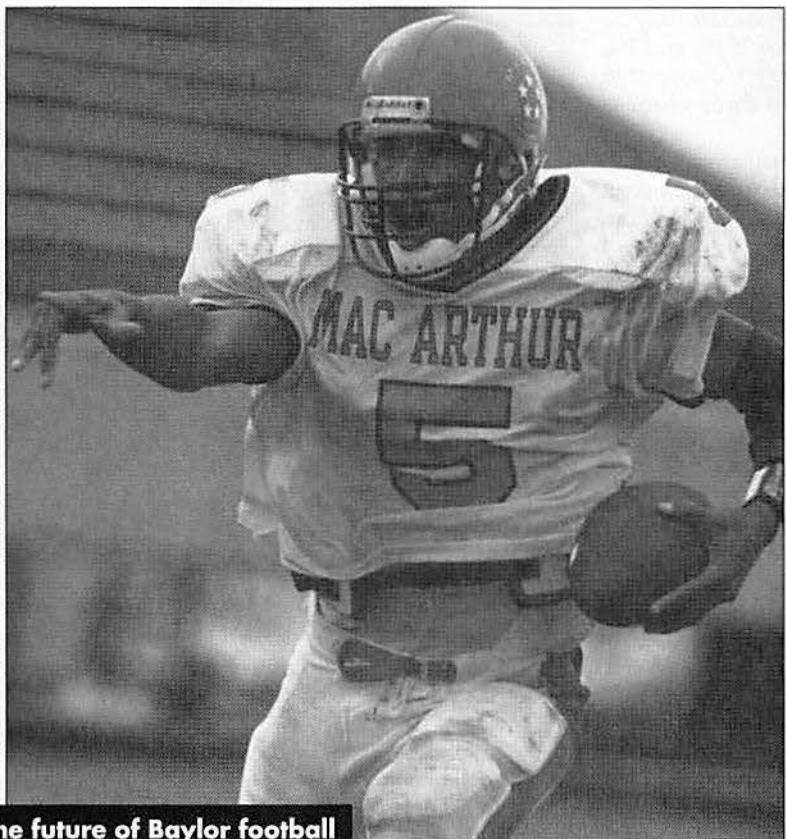
confident the freshman will be qualified by the time fall practice begins.

Then James, who is careful not to say anything derogatory about any of the individuals vying for the starting quarterback spot, can begin addressing what he views as the biggest weakness of recent Baylor teams: consistency at quarterback.

"I've watched a lot of Baylor games the last couple of years, and all they need is a great quarterback who can run, pass and make all the difference," James said. "Baylor could have won a lot more games if they would have had great play from their quarterback. I have a lot of big goals, and I pray to

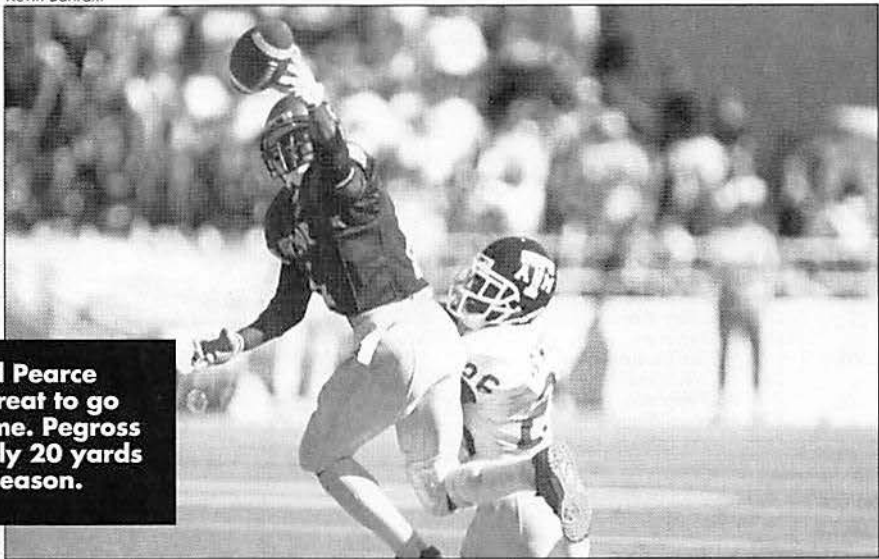
God that I can become the best quarterback ever to come through Baylor."

That might not be such an incredibly lofty goal. Considering how ineffective the Baylor quarterbacks and passing game have been in recent years, it's a real credit to the coaching staff and the other players, particularly the staple of outstanding running backs and the tradition-



The future of Baylor football lies in the arm of quarterback recruit Odell James, one of the most highly recruited athletes in this year's class.

Kevin Bartram



Junior split end Pearce Pegross is a threat to go deep at any time. Pegross averaged nearly 20 yards per catch last season.

ally strong defensive players, that Baylor has been extremely competitive.

Although they failed to earn a bowl bid last year, the Bears finished 7-4 in 1995 and tied with Texas A&M and Texas Tech for second in the SWC. And over the last five years, the Bears have attended three bowl games.

The problem for Baylor, however, has been playing against the so-called "big boys" of college football. Baylor hasn't beaten A&M since 1985, and the Bears have been thoroughly dominated by Texas in Reedy's first three years as the head coach.

The only other "major powers" Baylor has faced since Reedy took over in 1993 are Colorado, USC and Miami. Baylor lost those three games by an average of 18.3 points. That's not good news for a team scheduled to play games against four teams that finished among the Top 20 last year.

"When I became the head coach, the first thing we wanted to do is to develop a consistency in beating the teams we were supposed to beat," Reedy said. "I think we've done that. The next step, of course, is a much harder one."

"With the kids we've recruited and developed, we should be at a point where we can beat the Texas A&Ms and Texas of this world. And now, our kids and our fans expect us to compete for the Big 12 championship. We should expect nothing less than that."

Physically, the Bears certainly match up with most of the Big 12 powers. Baylor's recruiting classes over the last four years have been ranked among the nation's best. Consequently, the Bears' roster is loaded with top-rate talent.

That may be most evident at running back where Baylor is tremendously deep. Junior tailback Jerod Douglas returns after compiling one of the greatest seasons for a running back in Baylor history. The All-SWC performer rushed for 1,114 yards and gained 1,594 all-



BU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ DOUBLE DUTY

Head coach Chuck Reedy takes over as offensive coordinator in addition to his duty as head man. Reedy replaced Jack Crowe after Crowe was released. Reedy will have to do a much better job at getting the offense moving if Baylor expects to win many games.

■ RUN, JEROD, RUN

Jerod Douglas carried 211 times last season for 1,194 yards. Baylor is going to have to find someone else who can be effective when they touch the ball.

■ NO REDSHIRT

Baylor had one of the nation's top recruiting classes this winter and many are expected to contribute immediately. Quarterback Odell James, running back Darrell Bush and defensive back Tyson Wilson will be counted on heavily.

purpose yards. His speed and elusiveness make him a breakaway threat virtually every time he touches the ball.

The cupboard is hardly bare behind Douglas. Junior Anthony Hodge and sophomore Dexter Ford could start on many teams, but provide reliable depth for the Bears. And at fullback, senior Shawn Washington and junior Clifton Rubin return after solid seasons last year. Furthermore, several talented incoming freshmen could push for playing time at tailback or fullback.

Overall, the Bears return nine starters on offense, including talented receivers Kalief Muhammad and Pearce Pegross and three of five starting offensive linemen. So if James lives up to expectations, the Bears could be extremely dangerous offensively.

The main questions for Baylor, however, rest on the defensive side of the ball. The Bears finished fifth in the country in total defense last year, but seven starters from that unit, including first-round draft pick Daryl Gardener and All-SWC selections LaCurtis Jones and Adrian Robinson, are gone.

Baylor was particularly hit hard by losses up front, where the Bears must replace two down linemen and three linebackers. That's a potentially scary situation for Baylor's run defense,

especially since Baylor will travel to Nebraska on Oct. 12.

One of the defensive returners with plenty of experience is senior cornerback George McCullough. Last season, McCullough started all 11 games and broke up 14 passes, while intercepting one and recording 40 tackles. Reedy calls McCullough one of the premier cornerbacks in the conference and possibly the entire country.

Unfortunately for Baylor, there may not be enough defenders like McCullough for the Bears to make a serious push for the Big 12 South Division title. But with a favorable non-conference schedule and the potential of a vastly improved offense, Baylor is a team that could easily win seven or eight games and earn a bowl bid. ■

BAYLOR TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	11	Pearce Pegross	5-9	170	Jr.	LE	96	Sheldon Mallory	6-4	274	Jr.
	5	Derrius Thompson	6-2	203	So.		82	Dwight Johnson	6-4	266	Fr.
RT	69	Michael Johnson	6-3	305	Jr.	NG	61	Roderick Kinney	6-3	285	Jr.
	76	Carlos Rocha	6-3	291	Fr.		99	Derrick Fletcher	6-7	360	So.
RG	59	Kelvin Garmon	6-2	293	So.	RE	95	Donnie Embrá	6-2	295	Sr.
	68	Jerome Jackson	6-3	297	Jr.		87	Josh Wenke	6-3	265	Sr.
C	53	Danny Fletcher	6-4	247	Jr.	OLB	20	Clarence Cruse	6-3	226	So.
	74	Brian Sutton	6-4	259	Fr.		37	Kenyada Parker	6-2	207	So.
LG	57	Anthony Williams	6-3	267	So.	ILB	36	Dean Jackson	6-1	222	Jr.
	55	Chris Samps	6-1	271	So.		88	Don Arroyo	6-3	230	Fr.
LT	79	David Davis	6-4	308	Sr.	ILB	58	Glen Coy	6-3	248	Jr.
	67	Brandon Pierpoint	6-5	275	Fr.		34	Malcolm Hamilton	6-2	231	Sr.
TE	80	Bradley Domel	6-4	233	Jr.	OLB	3	Robert Mason	6-1	222	Sr.
	85	Clifford Isom	6-4	241	So.		16	Anthony Taylor	6-0	191	Jr.
WR	1	Kalief Muhammad	5-6	175	Sr.	CB	5	George McCullough	5-10	188	Sr.
	26	Chirs Cagnolatti	5-7	175	Jr.		21	Sean Armistead	5-9	174	Fr.
QB	7	Jeff Watson	6-0	200	Jr.	CB	15	Matt Anderson	5-10	176	So.
	17	Jermaine Alfred	6-1	215	So.		19	Allen Pace	5-10	166	Fr.
FB	48	Shawn Washington	6-1	230	Sr.	FS	7	Nikia Codie	6-3	204	So.
	31	Clifton Rubin	6-0	218	Jr.		25	Brandon Bonds	5-10	184	Fr.
TB	22	Jerod Douglas	5-9	173	Jr.	SS	33	Michael Benjamin	6-0	194	Sr.
	27	Anthony Overstreet	6-0	210	Jr.		6	Curtis Henderson	5-10	196	So.
PK	33	Kyle Atteberry	6-0	193	Fr.	P	43	Ty Atteberry	6-0	196	Sr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96

COLORADO



BY JOHN VONSCHRADER

Middle linebacker Matt Russell is as good as they come, but the question the Buffs have is how dependable are the players on either side of him?

S

pring football is, historically, a time for answering questions. With four months before the start of the season, coaches feel less pressure to give the starters all of the reps, and in some cases, they haven't yet figured out who the starters are.

All of which makes spring football the perfect proving ground — and in some cases a disproving ground — for the Buffs. Every spring a number of players rush to the forefront, while others disappear back into the pack. This spring was no exception.

Offensively, there were a number of pleasant surprises for the Buffs. Ayyub Abdul-Rahmaan made a successful switch from quarterback to receiver, filling out Colorado's two-deep there. At quarterback, redshirt freshman Jeremy Weisinger is beginning to grasp the offense, giving CU two quality backups behind Koy Detmer.

And along the offensive line, Andrew Welsh has filled

in nicely at tackle. And he's filled in off the field as well, bulking up to about 285 pounds.

But Dwayne Cherrington's emergence at tailback would have to be considered the biggest surprise. Cherrington could be considered the sleeper from last year's recruiting class, mostly because of the backs already on the team when he arrived.

"Well, we had three sophomore tailbacks, and not only did we have three sophomores, but they were all playing," running backs coach Ben Gregory said. "So yeah, he got lost. I didn't see him much because he was on the scout team. When I did see him, though, he showed some quickness and I was curious. He showed some physical toughness about him, and he's very quick. I didn't know he was as fast as he is."

As for CU's starting quarterback, the big concern was whether or not Detmer would be rusty after recovering

from his knee injury.

The answer was definitely not.

Detmer picked up right where he left off, though he wasn't involved in any drills that might accidentally see him get hit or rolled up on. His passes were on target, and he still throws the best ball of any of the quarterbacks.

Another concern, and a weakness during the 1995 campaign, was depth along the line. But last year's recruiting bonanza of six linemen has given CU the solid foundation it needs.

Depth is also not a problem at tight end where a logjam of players actually gives the Buffs too much of a good thing. Matt Lepsis, the starter, has been hot and cold when it comes to catching the ball. When he concentrates, he can make the grab and then turn up the field like a freight train. But when his attention wavers — and it has several times this spring — the 6-foot-5, 265-pound senior has trouble holding onto the ball.

This is Lepsis' final season at CU. He has the size and athleticism to catch on in the pros, but first he needs to remember to catch on to the ball. Backups Tennyson McCarty and Brodie Heffner don't have Lepsis' size, but if the senior isn't careful, he'll find himself being passed over before the year is through.

Not all the news was necessarily good. The Buffs thought they'd found their next great receiver in Chris Anderson and their next great center in Adam Reed. Those labels should be changed to "potentially great."

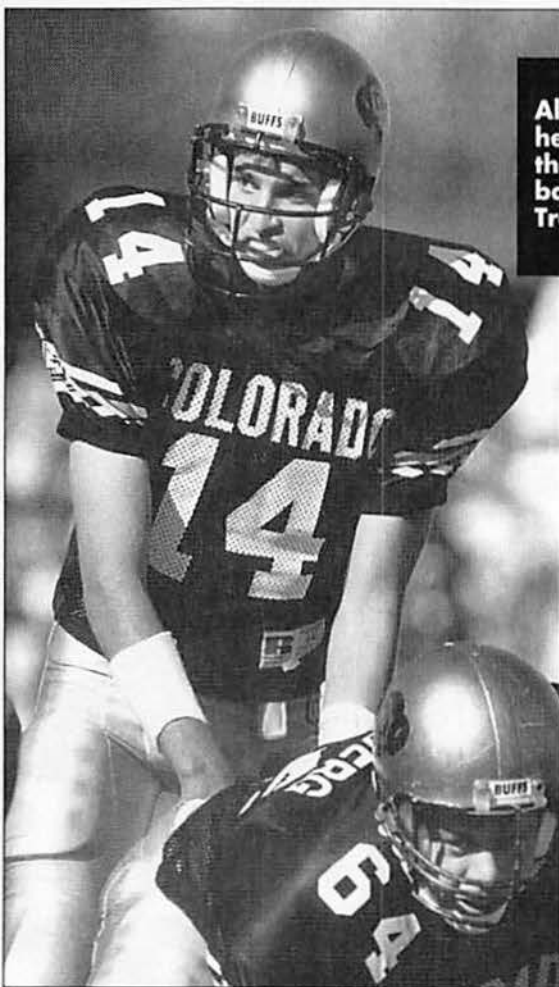
The 6-4, 220-pound Anderson lacks nothing in the talent department. He might not be as fast as a Michael Westbrook, but he's learning to fight through defensive backs and to catch the ball in traffic. But the attitude question surrounding him remains.

If Anderson still needs guidance, he need look no further than seniors Rae Carruth and James Kidd.

As for Reed, he appeared to be the perfect fit to replace four-year starter Bryan Stoltenberg. After transferring from Northwestern before last season, Reed patiently waited through the 1995 campaign before becoming eligible to play this year.

But Reed didn't secure the starting role that was practically handed to him. He struggled at the beginning of spring ball, allowing senior Kris Soden, a walkon, to make a run at the starting center job. To his credit, though, Reed came on at the end of spring and could firmly take hold of the starting job early next fall.

On the defensive side of the ball, there were a number of pleasant surprises. In the secondary, cornerback Dalton Simmons showed that he's truly back from a knee injury he suffered in the 1995 Fiesta Bowl. Simmons — who is now faster (4.3 speed) and stronger than he was before the injury — picked off John Hessler in the first scrimmage, returning the interception for a touchdown. While that



Although Koy Detmer was held out of contact during the spring, it appears he is back to his Heisman Trophy candidate form.

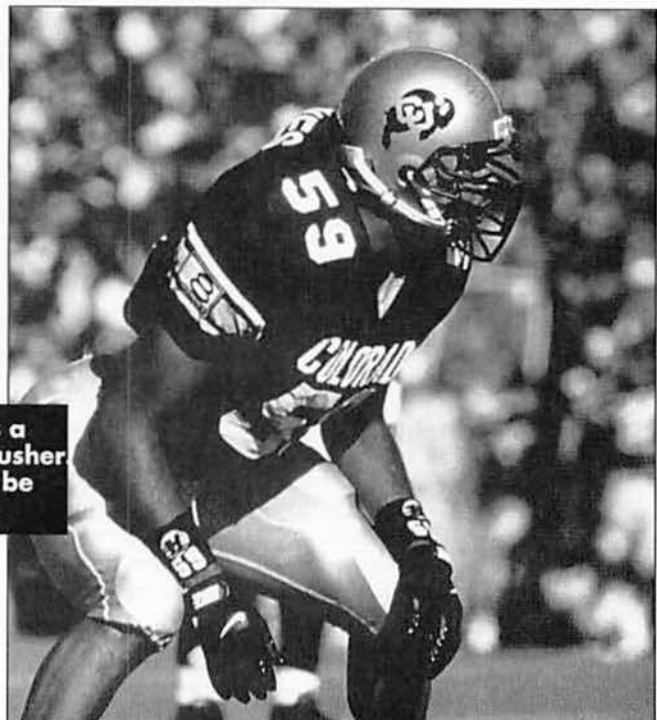
went a long way toward improving his confidence, it wasn't until he tweaked his knee later in the scrimmage that Simmons finally got rid of some of his tentativeness.

He reported to head trainer Dave Burton slightly panicked. Burton examined Simmons' knee, smiled and said, "It's as solid as a rock." It was the first real test for Simmons, and he passed with flying colors.

Defensive ends coach Jon Embree called Tim Hundley one of the spring's biggest surprises.

At weakside linebacker, Mike Phillips did and did not surprise. On the one hand, his progress in the spring caught the coaching staff's eyes, but his performance in the weight room was just business as usual. And when it comes to adding muscle, the 6-4, 220-pound Phillips isn't doing a lot of business.

But the biggest surprise was provided by Terrell Cade. Prior to the spring, Embree noted that he wanted to find out whether Nick Ziegler or Fred Jones had what it took to be the starting end opposite senior Greg Jones.



DE Greg Jones is a tenacious pass rusher. He just needs to be more consistent.

Embree probably couldn't have guessed that Cade would pass both of them this spring, especially since the sophomore was playing middle linebacker when practices began. But when academics forced Fred Jones to miss a week on the football field, Cade moved back to end and showed what he could do.

This spring also provided some answers in the secondary. Will there be depth? You bet. Cornerback Elton Davis, often in A.J. Christoff's doghouse, actually earned the defensive coordinator's praise. And nickel back Marcus Washington showed that his being named Defensive MVP of the Cotton Bowl was no fluke.

With the return of starters Steve Rosga (free safety) and Kenny Wilkins (cornerback), the emergence of Ryan Black at strong safety and the play of redshirt freshmen Tavon Cooper and Damon Dickey, this figures to be a strong point for CU, giving them the kind of starting talent and polished depth they haven't seen in at least four seasons.

On a less positive note was the development at middle linebacker. While senior Matt Russell will again be a defensive anchor there this season, the backup for the Butkus Award candidate, Clifton Peters, didn't have a great spring. Cabral knows that anything can happen and Peters must be ready to step in at a moment's notice. That means the standard that Peters is held up to is a little higher than for many other players.

At defensive tackle, Hundley wanted to find a group of players that could alternate at the position to carry the load through the season.

The search took a turn for the worse when Stacy Patterson fell behind academically and was held out for a couple days and Aaron Marshall sprained his ankle.

Overall this spring, the defense progressed faster than the offense, leading to low scoring scrimmages and domi-



CU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ CONFIDENCE

Jon Hessler needed a strong spring to regain confidence he lost toward the end of last season. Even though starter Koy Detmer is back (and healthy), Colorado needed to know it could count on Hessler if Detmer goes down. Spring is one thing, lining up with the game on the line is another.

■ CENTER OF CONCERN

Colorado depends so much on its center position, that it came away worried about the fall. Adam Reed has best shot at starting, but that's not a lock when he didn't nail down the job in the spring.

■ CATCHING A CLUE

Chris Anderson could be the next great Buff receiver. But a "me against the world" mentality has limited his potential. The Buffs would like to see an attitude correction before fall.

nation by CU's defenders. The offense finally got untracked, however, in the spring game behind the man who saved the Buffs' season last year.

It might have taken all spring, but Rick Neuheisel finally discovered how to re-motivate Hessler. After Neuheisel publicly questioned his quarterback's desire, Hessler put on a show that must have surprised even his coach, as he outscored Weisinger 30-14 in the intra-squad scrimmage.

From the start, Hessler regained the form that he had shown last season after taking over the starting job from an injured Detmer. The junior completed 15-of-24 passes for 241 yards and three touchdowns. Even more impressive was that Hessler's squad — he and Weisinger alternated playing with the No. 1 and 2 offenses and against the No. 1 and 2 defenses — scored on all five drives that he led.

One situation that wasn't quite resolved was the job of starting tailback. Neuheisel praised the play of the odds-on starter Herchell Troutman, but added that he was equally pleased with Lendon Henry and Cherrington, who emerged as a contender this spring. Marlon Barnes, the third player in last season's tailback trio, did not play in the game due to personal prob-

lems and a missed practice.

But despite the few questions that remain, Neuheisel was clearly excited about the results of spring practice.

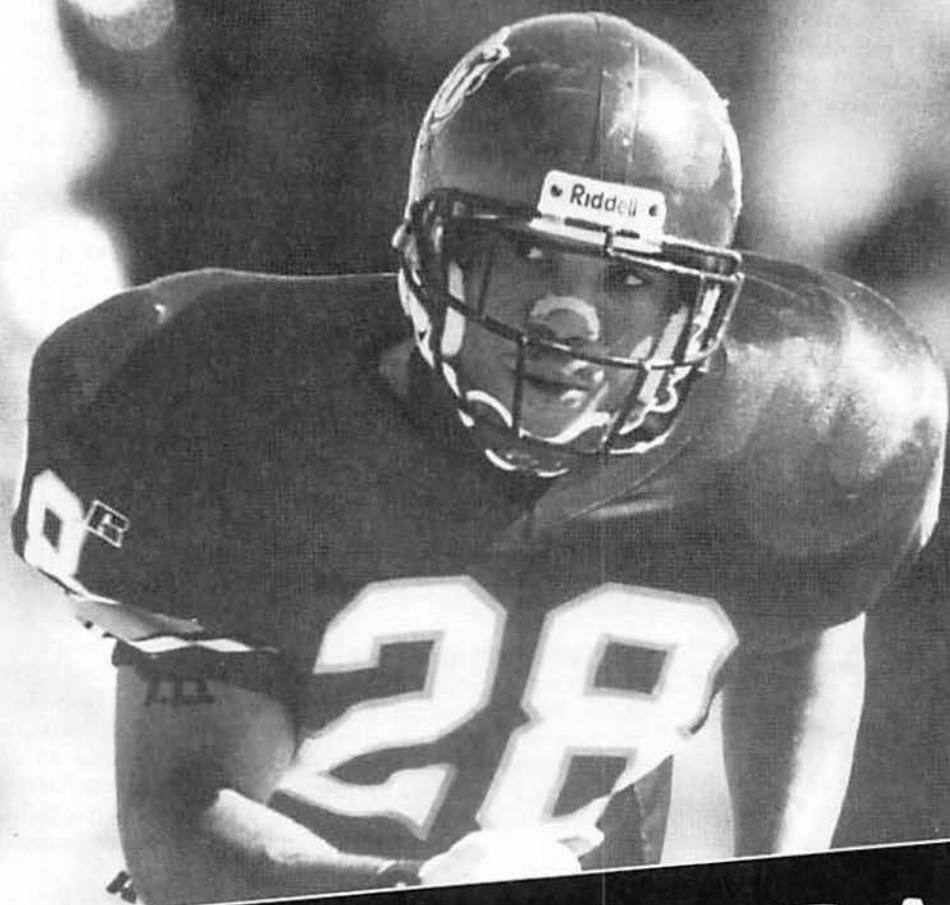
"I think we accomplished three things," he said afterward. "Carrying over from a great finish in a defensive season the last three games (of last year), and I thought the spring practice was a great spring practice from a defensive standpoint. Offensively, we saw signs of life today that I think will serve as a catalyst in the off-season."

"Third, I think that everybody's got a positive feeling about our team now that spring is over. To finish with good feelings on both sides of the ball I think is a springboard for next season." ■

COLORADO TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	21	Rae Carruth	5-11	190	Sr.	DE	59	Greg Jones	6-4	250	Sr.
	6	Darrin Chiaverini	6-2	190	So.		54	Jeff Nabholz	6-5	250	Sr.
WR	2	James Kidd	5-8	160	Sr.	NT	55	Ryan Olson	6-2	255	Jr.
	18	Chris Anderson	6-4	220	Jr.		99	Stacy Patterson	6-2	265	Jr.
LT	74	Andrew Welsh	6-6	285	Jr.	DT	77	Viliami Maumau	6-2	290	Jr.
	70	Ben Nichols	6-6	285	Jr.		90	Aaron Marshall	6-4	260	So.
LG	52	Kyle Smith	6-6	295	Sr.	DE	48	Terrell Cade	6-4	240	So.
	63	Corey Kish	6-4	275	Fr.		76	Nick Ziegler	6-5	240	So.
C	50	Adam Reed	6-2	285	So.	WLB	91	Mike Phillips	6-4	225	Jr.
	51	Kris Soden	6-4	275	Sr.		8	Hannibal Navies	6-3	240	So.
RG	65	Chris Naeole	6-4	295	Sr.	MLB	16	Matt Russell	6-2	245	Sr.
	75	Aaron Wade	6-7	285	Jr.		44	Clifton Peters	6-2	235	So.
RT	78	Melvin Thomas	6-3	295	Jr.	SLB	33	Ron Merkerson	6-3	255	Jr.
	79	Matt Jones	6-5	290	Sr.		66	Brandon Southward	6-4	240	So.
TE	88	Matt Lepsis	6-5	265	Sr.	LCB	20	Kenny Wilkins	6-3	210	Sr.
	41	Tennysen McCarty	6-3	250	Jr.		4	Toray Elton Davis	5-9	175	Jr.
WR	80	Phil Savoy	6-3	200	Jr.	SS	6	Ryan Black	5-10	190	Jr.
	4	Robert Toler	6-0	180	Fr.		45	Maurice Henriques	6-1	205	Sr.
QB	14	Koy Detmer	6-1	185	Sr.	FS	15	Steve Rosga	6-1	210	Sr.
	7	Jon Hessler	6-2	195	Jr.		36	Ryan Sutter	6-2	195	Jr.
TB	5	Herchell Troutman	5-7	180	Jr.	RCB	37	Marcus Washington	6-2	210	So.
	39	Lendon Henry	6-0	190	Jr.		7	Dalton Simmons	6-0	180	Sr.
PK	12	Jason Lesley	5-8	165	Jr.	P	28	Andy Mitchell	6-3	190	Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



IOWA STATE

BY TODD STEVENS

I

n his first season as Iowa State's football coach, Dan McCarney improved the Cyclones by three full games in the win column. He also brought the fans back to Cyclone Stadium and turned a talented, but misused, freshman into the best sophomore running back in NCAA history.

With Heisman Trophy finalist Troy Davis back for his junior season, four starters from the offensive line that paved Davis' way to a 2,010 yard season, two experienced quarterbacks and possibly the best tandem of receivers ISU has seen in nearly 10 years, McCarney's club should be even better offensively.

But a defense that finished last in the country against the run (giving up 458.4 yards a game) for the second-straight season remains in the rebuilding phase.

Compounding problems, ISU will play the nation's third-toughest schedule in 1996. The Cyclones are going to score points, and they're going to give them up.

Every conversation concerning Cyclone football in 1996 will begin, and probably end, with Davis, Davis, or T.D., as he's known in Ames, will be looking to return to

the Downtown Athletic Club after finishing fifth in the Heisman voting in 1995. The first-team All-American was just the fifth NCAA Division I-A rusher in history to break the 2,000 yard mark. He was also the first to accomplish the feat during the sophomore season.

Davis, who scored 16 touchdowns, gained his record-breaking yardage on 345 carries for a 5.8 average. He also finished as the nation's leading all-purpose yardage performer with 2,466 total yards. And all this after being given the ball a grand total of 35 times under the previous coaching regime as a freshman, when the Cyclones finished 0-10-1.

McCarney knows that with two full years left (provided he doesn't bolt for the NFL) for the 5-foot-8, 190-pound junior, Davis could perform even greater acts of football excellence.

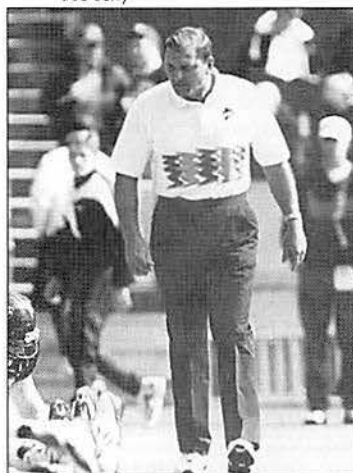
"As good as he was last year, he still has room for improvement," McCarney said. "He knows it, we know it and we're going to do everything we can do to help him improve. We just need to make sure he picks up where he left off."

McCarney has started to provide relief for Davis.

First, he was able to lure Davis' brother, Darren, a running back with even better credentials than T.D.'s coming out of Miami (Southridge) High School, to Ames so that the two could team in the backfield. Darren turned down Miami, Florida State, Ohio State and Notre Dame in favor of the Cyclones.

McCarney also flew out to Philadelphia with his offensive coaches to spend some time with the Eagles' offensive minds. He wanted to find out

Bob Berry



Dan McCarney promises his defense will be vastly better than last year's.

how Ray Rhodes incorporated his best two running backs — Ricky Watters and Charlie Garner — into the lineup at the same time.

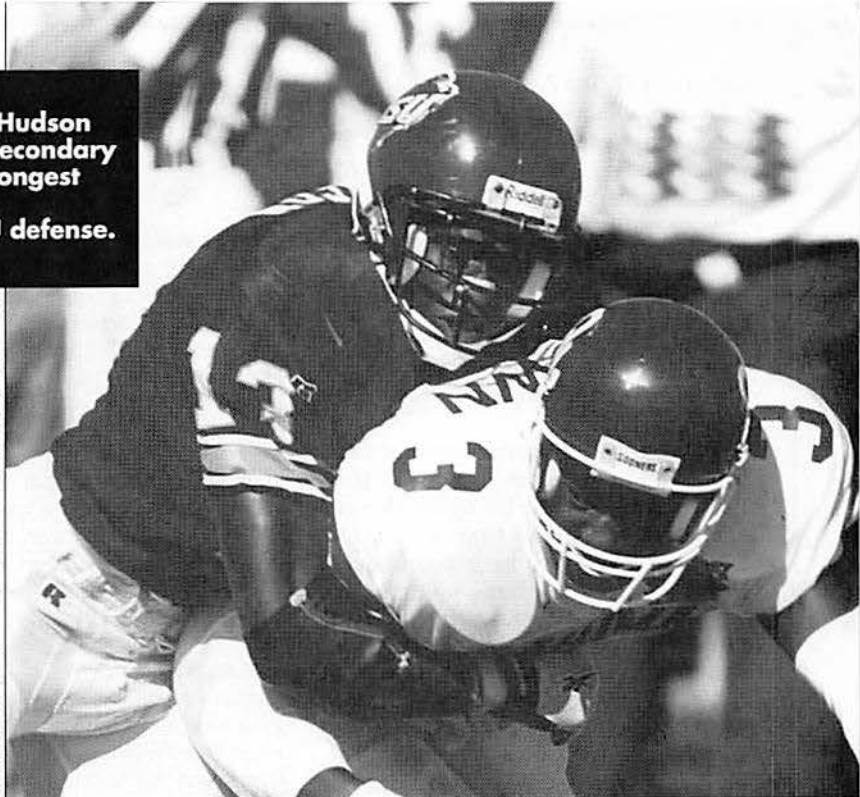
There's also a two-fold problem, of the pleasant variety, at quarterback where senior Todd Doxzon and strong-armed sophomore Todd Bandhauer each enjoyed strong springs. McCarney said Doxzon will be the starter heading into fall practice, but barely.

"Doxzon is the most consistent quarterback right now," McCarney said.

Doxzon completed 58-of-100 passes for 730 yards and four touchdowns in an injury-riddled season as a junior. Bandhauer, subbing on several occasions, clicked on 42-of-90 throws for 501 yards and five touchdowns.

Proving protection for the signal-callers and paving the way for the Davises is a mammoth, seasoned offensive line that averages 294 pounds.

Corner Kevin Hudson (13) and the secondary will be the strongest assets for the rebuilding ISU defense.



Bob Berry

Senior tackle Tim Kohn was a second-team All-Big Eight performer in 1995 and will almost certainly be a first-teamer this year. He is among the nation's most coveted senior tackles. Kurt Levetzow will start at right tackle.

The guards are Matt Rahfaldt and Doug Easley and have been the glue for McCarney's versatile line. Anchoring the unit is senior center Pat Augafa, a 350-pound Samoan who was named the Big Eight's Offensive Newcomer of the Year in 1995. His quickness off the ball is frightening for someone so large.

Redshirt freshman Joe Parmentier has jumped ahead of senior Rodney Guggenheim at fullback. McCarney likens the 5-11, 250-pounder to ex-

The quarterback situation is still unclear entering the fall although Todd Doxzon owns a slight edge over sophomore Todd Bandhauer (17). But there are no questions in the backfield, where Heisman Trophy candidate Troy Davis (28) returns.



Bob Berry

Purdue bull Mike Alstott.

There's electricity surrounding the wideouts with silky junior Ed Williams, who had 46 catches for 639 yards and seven scores last year, teaming with senior Tyrone Watley. Watley, a former starter for Pacific, transferred to ISU after that school disbanded its football program.

Tight end Dennis DiBiase suffered a broken foot during spring practice and will be pushed by sophomore Damian Gibson in the fall.

Spring practice brought with it multiple position switches. No fewer than nine Cyclones will be lining up this fall at different spots than from a year ago. Defensive ends have become offensive tackles. Tight ends have switched to defensive ends, and fullbacks have become outside linebackers.

But the majority of the changes will affect the defense where a youthful group will cross the threshold of Big 12 football. There is only one senior — free safety Mike Lincavage — in the starting lineup. There are only four in the entire defensive two deep.

The lack of experience didn't faze the former Wisconsin defensive coordinator, however, as he issued a bold proclamation near the end of spring drills.

"It'll be the last time, I promise you this, that we'll ever finish last in defense against the rush," McCarney said. "That will never happen again. Ever. As long as I'm the head coach here.

"It was embarrassing to me, the coaches and the players. That had never happened to me before and it'll never happen again. If you're going to be in the mix for bowl games, championships and first-division finishes, you better play defense. And that's the challenge that lies ahead for our defense."

McCarney inserted bigger, stronger physiques into the defensive alignment. The linebackers alone average 25 pounds more per man and stand an average of two inch-



ISU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ BALANCE

Everyone knows Troy Davis can run, but if ISU can't put together a decent passing attack, watch his numbers fall off considerably. Davis caught the nation by surprise last year. It won't happen again.

■ RUN STOPPING

The Cyclones had the worst defense against the run last year. That kind of porous front line will get ISU nowhere fast in the run-dominated Big 12.

■ EARLY W'S

Getting off to a good start will go a long way in giving this team the confidence it needs to finish out of the conference cellar. With the exception of Iowa, three of ISU's first games are winnable. Based on last season's records, ISU has the third-toughest schedule behind Oklahoma and Indiana.

es taller than last season.

Two longtime starters at linebacker, Tim Sanders and Michael Cooper, have lost their starting jobs. The inside starters emerging from spring drills were junior college transfer Derrick Clark and redshirt freshman Dave Brcka. The outside hitters are James Elmore, a fullback last season, and Chin Achebe.

Former offensive lineman Joe Cominsky is the starter at left defensive end, while returning starters Rudy Ruffolo and Greg Schoon man the tackle positions. Each has added more than 20 pounds since last season and are being pushed for playing time.

"When you get ripped as badly as we did defensively last season, it's the front seven. The whole front seven," McCarney said. "We were dominated by so many Big Eight teams last season, and these teams aren't disappearing off our schedule. If we don't start slowing people down in the running game, there's going to be someone else here in a couple of years, and I don't want that to happen."

There was an improvement against the run in spring practice.

The Cyclone secondary was the strongest against the pass last season and is blessed with returners.

Lincavage, who made 109 tackles last season, will head a unit that brings back starters Kevin Hudson and Dawan Anderson at the corners, and strong safety Tracy Williams. Experienced reserves include senior free safety Jason Brown, senior strong safety Kelvin Moore and corners Preston Rhamy and Mike O'Brien. ISU will also welcome back corner Kemp Knighten, a star freshman two seasons ago who missed all of the 1995 campaign with a knee injury. He is expected to be back at full strength.

The kicking game is solid. Sophomore Jamie Kohl is back after hitting 10 field goals and 26-of-30 PATs as a freshman. Senior punter Marc Harris owns a 42.1 career average and could be a first-team All-Big 12 selection. ■

IOWA STATE TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	83	Gerrick Bivens	5-11	171	Jr.	OLB	49	Brandon Rutledge	5-11	210	Fr.
	80	Jerome Henry	6-0	183	Jr.		36	James Elmore	6-2	220	Fr.
LT	77	Tim Kohn	6-5	307	Sr.	LE	62	Joe Cominsky	6-5	247	Fr.
		Oliver Ross	6-4	268	Sr.		74	Jack Mitchell	6-4	248	Fr.
LG	75	Matt Rahfeldt	6-3	274	Jr.	LDT	97	Rudy Ruffolo	6-3	268	Jr.
	79	Charlie Bogwill	6-2	286	So.		72	Bill Marsau	6-5	264	Fr.
C	65	Patrick Augafa	6-2	335	Sr.	RDT	90	Greg Schoon	6-3	280	Jr.
	67	Paul Skarivadt	6-2	277	Sr.		55	Terry Thomas	6-2	275	Fr.
RG	66	Doug Easley	6-2	282	Sr.	RE	26	Chin Achebe	6-1	246	So.
	68	Eddie Shufford	6-0	271	Jr.		86	Mike Hansen	6-2	246	So.
RT	71	Kurt Levetzow	6-5	260	Jr.	ILB	48	Dave Brcka	6-2	233	Fr.
	52	Chris Brunsbold	6-3	309	So.		54	Andre Lee	6-0	230	So.
FL	81	Ed Williams	6-3	197	Jr.	ILB		Derrick Clark	6-4	237	Jr.
	85	Tom Radke	5-11	182	Jr.		40	Tim Sanders	6-0	222	Sr.
QB	7	Todd Doxzon	6-1	191	Sr.	RCB	13	Kevin Hudson	6-0	175	Jr.
	17	Todd Bandhauer	6-3	234	So.		37	Mike O'Brien	5-11	190	So.
TB	28	Troy Davis	5-8	190	Jr.	LCB	14	Dawan Anderson	5-8	164	So.
	6	Graston Norris	5-8	182	Sr.		25	Kevin Wilson	5-10	182	So.
FB	22	Rodney Guggenheim	5-10	228	Sr.	SS	31	Tracy Williams	6-0	218	Jr.
	42	Joe Parmentier	5-11	250	So.		2	Kelvin Moore	6-1	207	Sr.
TE	87	Dennis DiBiase	6-2	245	Sr.	FS	20	Mike Lincavage	6-1	202	Sr.
	89	Damian Gibson	6-4	247	So.		23	Jason Brown	5-10	188	Sr.
PK	45	Jamie Kohl	6-0	187	So.	P	16	Marc Harris	5-11	202	Sr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96

KANSAS



BY DENNIS DODD

Last season, running back June Henley led the Jayhawks in all-purpose yards and was second on the team in rushing.

T

he actions of a street hack, whoever he was, won't be forgotten by Kansas linebacker Ronnie Ward.

Forgiven? Maybe. But not forgotten.

"I don't know who it was," said KU's senior from St. Louis. "I was undercut. I was pretty upset because I knew what had happened to my shoulder. In the heat of competition anything can happen, though. It's all part of the game."

That spring day in May 1994 during a pick-up basketball game, Ward went up for the most costly layup of his athletic career.

When he came down, he was off-balance, fell backwards and broke his fall with his hands. Ward's hands and arms held up. It was the left shoulder that couldn't absorb the shock.

It was the same left shoulder that had been damaged by torn ligaments and was partially dislocated seven months earlier in a game against Oklahoma State.

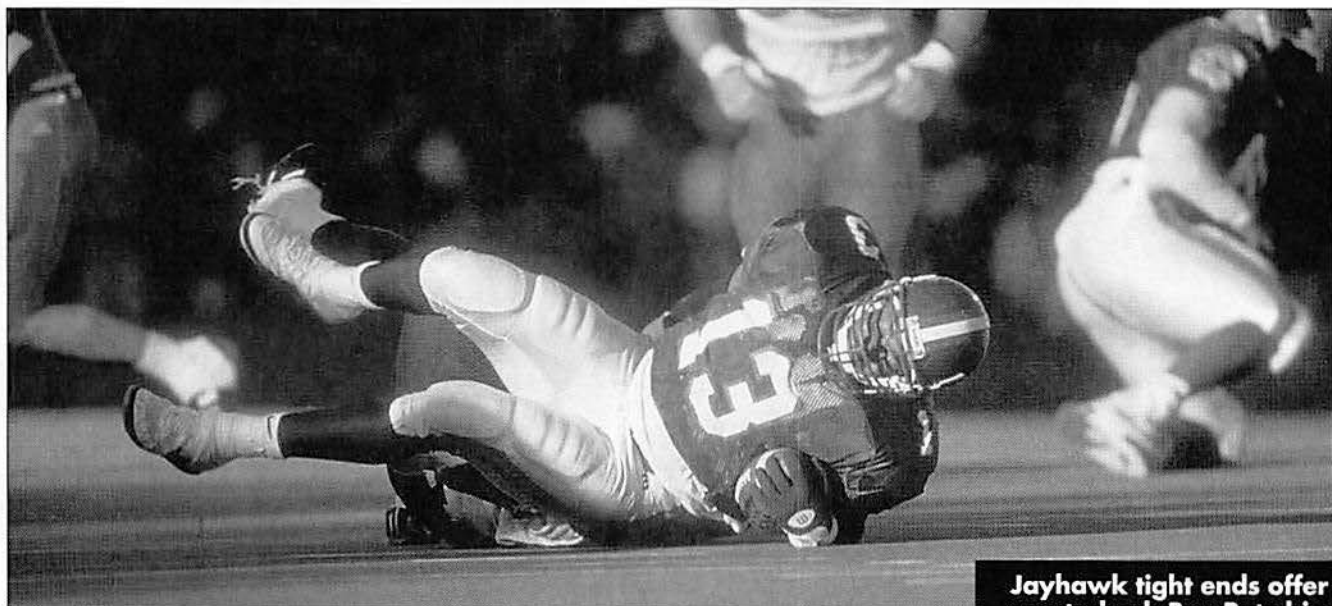
That the shoulder was reinjured after one of the dirtiest plays in basketball mattered little. Street hacks come and go. College football careers are treasures that come around only once.

Twice interrupted, Ward's career is back on track. And a healthy Ward might be the main reason KU can duplicate its once-in-a-lifetime 10-2 record last season.

Because of Ward, KU Coach Glen Mason called his defense the best in his nine years in Lawrence. Seven starters return from the defensive unit that was 39th in scoring defense and 19th in turnover margin last year.

"Top to bottom, (former linemen) Dana Stubblefield and Gilbert Brown were dominating, but we were weak in the secondary," Mason said of the 1992 defense that produced those two NFL linemen. "Right now, I think they're moving around and playing with more confidence since we've been here."

"It looks like the best defense that we've had since we've been here."



Bob Berry

Jayhawk tight ends offer quarterback Ben Rutz big, reliable targets to throw to. Senior Hosea Friday (13) caught 12 passes for 132 yards last season.

Ward is the main reason. Despite missing the final three games of 1994, he led the team in tackles. He was a Butkus Award nominee for 1995 until he went up for that fateful layup.

"My shoulder popped out of place," Ward said of the basketball re-injury. "It felt like something snapped in my shoulder. I had to put it back in place myself. It was pretty painful. I knew something was wrong immediately."

It was more than a shoulder injury.

It was mental and physical anguish, again. The first shoulder injury cut Ward's junior season short after eight games.

The rehab and hope for a productive senior season in 1995 suddenly became meaningless.

Ward redshirted in KU's amazing season, its best in 90 years.

It was a season during which KU upset both Colorado and Oklahoma to finish in a second place Big Eight tie.

Helping out Ward on defense is a veteran defensive line as all three starters return.

Nose tackle Brett McGraw led the defensive line with 31 solo tackles last season.

If the Jayhawks are going to duplicate double-figure victories, they must answer questions at quarterback and receiver. Almost every other position is set.

No. 1 quarterback Ben Rutz suffered a knee injury in the spring that required surgery.

He is expected back healthy in time for fall drills.

But there still is some doubt. Rutz, a former Nebraska blue-chip recruit, has started for only one season since high school. And that was two years ago at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M.

Rutz was beaten out by junior college transfer Mark Williams last year. Williams led the Jayhawks to a 7-0 start

and a No. 6 national ranking. He finished as the offensive MVP of the Aloha Bowl in his only year as a starter.

"I didn't express it," Rutz said of the injury. "I came to realize it. Personally, I could have done better or worked harder."

The last time Rutz suffered a knee injury was his red-shirt freshman year three years at Nebraska. At the time, he was running No. 1 over somebody named Tommie Frazier. Rutz went down, Frazier took over and, well, you know the rest.

There is no such Frazier behind Rutz at KU. If he is unable to go, left-handed junior Matt Johnner, who himself was knocked out with a sprained ankle in the spring, will play.

But the Kansas faithful don't want to think about that possibility.

KU also must develop receivers for Rutz' passes. There is precious little experience.

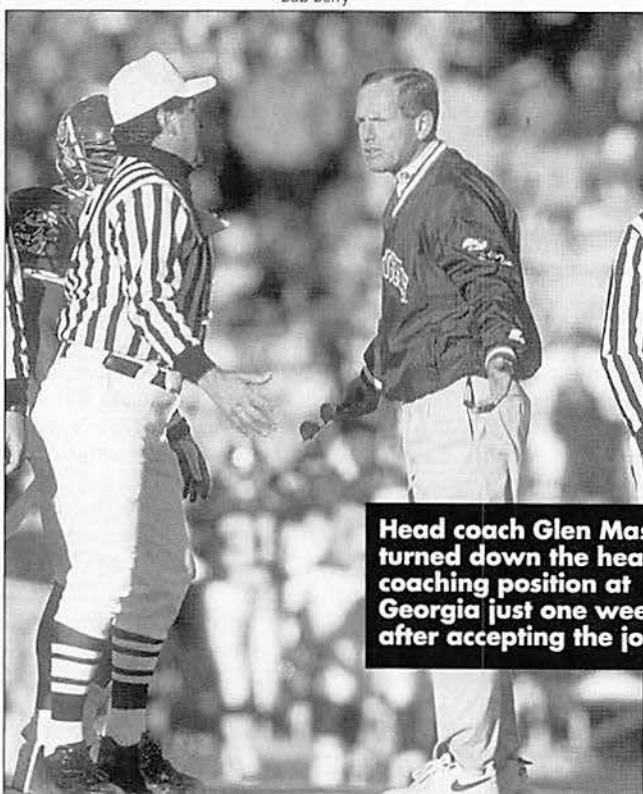
Senior deep threat Isaac Byrd, fifth in Big Eight receiving last year, is far and away the best of a thin lot. The only other senior is Andre Carter who caught only three passes as a junior.

One player Rutz will be able to find is tight end Jim Moore. Moore caught 18 passes for 224. Senior Hosea Friday added 12 catches for 132 yards last season.

Mason may not need a load of receivers if June Henley continues his present course toward the NFL.

The senior running back rushed for 766 yards and caught 26 passes for 312 more yards. The senior from Ohio

Bob Berry



Head coach Glen Mason turned down the head coaching position at Georgia just one week after accepting the job.

State territory (Columbus, Ohio) is 1,297 yards away from breaking the school rushing record.

But there was a time in which Henley was not so happy in Lawrence.

Henley was so frustrated that he considered coming early for the NFL draft. Mason departed briefly for Georgia, and Henley didn't know what his role would be under a new coach.

But giving in to Henley's desires are secondary to Mason. He has succeeded spreading the carries around in the backfield so it's hard to question his methods. Henley and the departed L.T. Levine's best game as a two-headed tailback came last year when they combined for 294 yards and four touchdowns against TCU.

It's hard to argue with that kind of success. For Henley, it is another typically deep Kansas backfield he will have to face to get his share of yards.

Senior Mark Sanders (5.8-yard average on 18 carries) returns from an injury, and junior Eric Vann (fourth on the team with 235 yards) will return in the fall after playing baseball this spring.

"If you only have one tailback then he should play," Mason said. "But if you have three, then three should play....We've got other guys. We're not a one-man team. The cupboard is not bare."

Backfield depth could be part of the reason for Mason's return to Lawrence. Before the Aloha Bowl, Mason had agreed to become the next head coach at Georgia.

The morning of the game, Christmas morning, Mason announced he would return to Lawrence.

With the return, Mason will become the coach with the longest tenure at Kansas. Mason's 92nd game, in the season opener, will be the most of any Kansas coach and his 43 wins are one short of the Kansas record.

The offensive line features five players who started at least five games last season. Right tackle Scott Whitaker



KU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ BEST BYRD

Kansas wide receiver Isaac Byrd might be the best athlete at KU. He led the Jayhawk baseball team in batting in 1994 and led the football team in receptions and receiving yards last year. Kansas needs a strong year out of him this season to help new quarterback Ben Rutz.

■ LINEBACKING DUO

Linebackers Jason Thoren (161 stops) and Ronnie Ward (214 tackles) enter the 1996 season with a combined 375 tackles. Thoren led the team last season with 119 tackles. Ward will rejoin Thoren, returning from a redshirt year because of injury.

■ VETERANS

Kansas has experience returning in 1996. Freshmen and sophomores dominated the roster last season and should provide much needed experience.

(6-6, 290) and tight end Jim Moore (18 catches) are All-Big 12 material.

The secondary is solidified by the return of senior Tony Blevins. Blevins blew his knee out two-thirds of the way through the 1994 season and couldn't rehab enough to make it back for 1995. The pure cover corner will fit in somewhere at corner or safety.

Sophomore Jamie Harris had an impressive freshman season after being forced into action because of injuries. Since then fellow sophomore Michael Allen came on in the spring to claim a starting spot.

The veteran defensive line in the 3-4 scheme is anchored by former rodeo cowboy Brett McGraw who will try to hold up blockers so guys like Thoren and Ward can make tackles.

"He looks like he never missed a beat," McGraw said of Ward.

By the time he suits Ward against Ball State on Aug. 29, it will have been 22 months since his last game. Make that 22 months of more bitterness than sweetness.

Yes, the Jayhawks enjoyed their best season in 90 years. Yes, the injury opened a spot for then-sophomore Jason Thoren who responded with 119 tackles and three interceptions.

"Not being able to practice and play in the fall made me feel like I was missing something," Ward said.

Finally back on the field, Ward is once again ready to resume his role as a vicious hitter. The biggest hurdle now may be mental for Ward. His head is back into football but is his twice-injured shoulder?

Will he hold back just the smallest bit when it's time to lead with that left shoulder pad?


Ward said his mind is clear. The flesh is healed and willing. Just to make sure, he's staying away from street hacks.

"I haven't played basketball since then," Ward said. "I don't play anymore." ■

KANSAS TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	1	Isaac Byrd	6-2	180	Sr.	OLB	47	Patrick Brown	5-10	200	So.
	86	Matt Vandree	6-0	185	Jr.		58	J.J. Johnson	6-2	230	So.
LT	79	Scott Whitaker	6-6	285	Sr.	5T	83	Dewey Houston	6-4	255	Jr.
	50	Michael Lies	6-3	260	Fr.	-or-	90	Dan Dercher	6-6	255	So.
LG	76	Justin Glasgow	6-6	255	So.	N	70	Brett McGraw	6-1	280	Jr.
	73	Dameon Hunt	6-3	290	Fr.		94	Pat Bishop	6-4	290	Jr.
C	55	Jim Stiebel	6-2	275	Sr.	3T	57	Kevin Kopp	6-4	260	Sr.
	68	Chris Enneking	6-3	260	Fr.		63	Dion Johnson	6-4	275	Fr.
RG	77	Cleve Roberts	6-6	290	So.	R	49	Chris Jones	6-2	235	Sr.
	72	Shawn Vang	6-2	265	So.		95	Jeremy Hanak	6-6	225	Fr.
RT	71	Derrick Chandler	6-7	310	Jr.	FLD	38	Jason Thoren	6-2	230	Jr.
	75	Rob Wise	6-4	300	Fr.		51	Adam Marinello	6-3	215	Fr.
TE	89	Jim Moore	6-3	260	Sr.	BND	46	Ronnie Ward	6-0	225	Sr.
	12	Hosea Friday	6-2	240	Sr.		60	Steve Bratten	6-1	220	So.
QB	8	Ben Rutz	6-0	190	Sr.	LC	23	Jason Harris	5-10	170	Jr.
	18	Matt Johner	6-1	195	Jr.		7	Mitch Bowles	5-8	170	Fr.
RB	34	Mark Sanders	6-0	215	Sr.	SS	24	Maurice Gaddie	5-9	185	Jr.
	33	Paul Davis	5-11	185	Fr.		5	Thad Rawls	5-11	190	Fr.
RB	20	June Henley	5-11	205	Sr.	FS	43	Michael Allen	5-10	190	So.
	12	Carl Arnold	5-5	160	Fr.	-or-	28	Tony Blevins	6-0	170	Sr.
WR	80	Andre Carter	5-10	165	Sr.	RC	37	Jamie Harris	5-10	175	So.
	31	Luke Richesson	5-9	195	Sr.		29	Manolito Jones	5-9	165	Jr.
PK	36	Jeff McCord	5-9	215	Jr.	P	41	Dean Royal	6-2	170	Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-88



Wide receiver Kevin Lockett electrifies the Kansas State passing game with his acrobatic catches and ability to catch the ball in traffic.

KANSAS

STATE

BY DENNIS DODD

K

ansas State has climbed every mountain but one.

The Big Red One.

Only Kansas State and six other major college programs have won at least nine games for the last three seasons. Since 1993, only eight other teams have more games than the Wildcat's 28.

Since 1993, K-State has beaten or tied every Big Eight team.

Except Nebraska.

The Huskers remain the one conference foe that coach Bill Snyder has been unable to defeat. And that fact has stuck with the Wildcats like a bad cold.

Kansas State has become a legitimate national power with an asterisk.

They finished with a No. 7 national ranking and tied for second behind Nebraska in the last season of the Big Eight, capping off a 10-2 season with a Holiday Bowl vic-

tory over Colorado State.

But none of that would compare with beating the two-time defending national champs. It's been 28 years and counting since K-State beat Nebraska.

The goal remains the same as K-State joins Nebraska in the North Division of the Big 12. The winner of the division goes to Big 12 playoff Dec. 7 in St. Louis. Anything less and the Wildcats will be standing at the bottom of that Big Red hill.

"That's one of our goals," All-America cornerback Chris Canty said referring to a 49-25 loss in Lincoln. "I guarantee next year will be a better game."

Think Nebraska doesn't linger in the Wildcats' psyches? Canty wears a worn out T-shirt quoting a Nebraska player from the 1994 meeting won by the Huskers, 17-6. "Nebraska is still Nebraska," it reads, "and K-State is still K-State."

Kansas State has come miles from the hapless program that Snyder took over in 1989, but until K-State

Bob Berry

beats Nebraska, Canty probably will wear the shirt as a reminder.

The Wildcats will try to make the climb this year with starters returning at 13 of 24 positions.

Nine of those 13 starters were at least honorable mention All-Big Eight. Three — Canty, receiver Kevin Lockett and cornerback Joe Gordon — made at least one All-America list last season.

The defense was the headliner last season but has to fill some big gaps. It was the No. 1 unit in the nation last year, allowing just 250.8 yards per game. It was no fluke. K-State became the first Big Eight school in 16 years to record three shutouts in a row as it blanked Akron, Northern Illinois and Missouri in consecutive weeks.

"They're a great defense," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said following the Cornhusker victory over K-State.

With its losses, K-State will have to prove itself defensively again.

The loss of All-Americans Tim Colston at defensive tackle and Percell Gaskins at linebacker opened the biggest holes.

The defensive line star this season is senior end Nyle Wiren who had eight sacks in 1995 while fighting through injuries. Linebackers Travis Ochs and DeShawn Fogle are big athletic types.

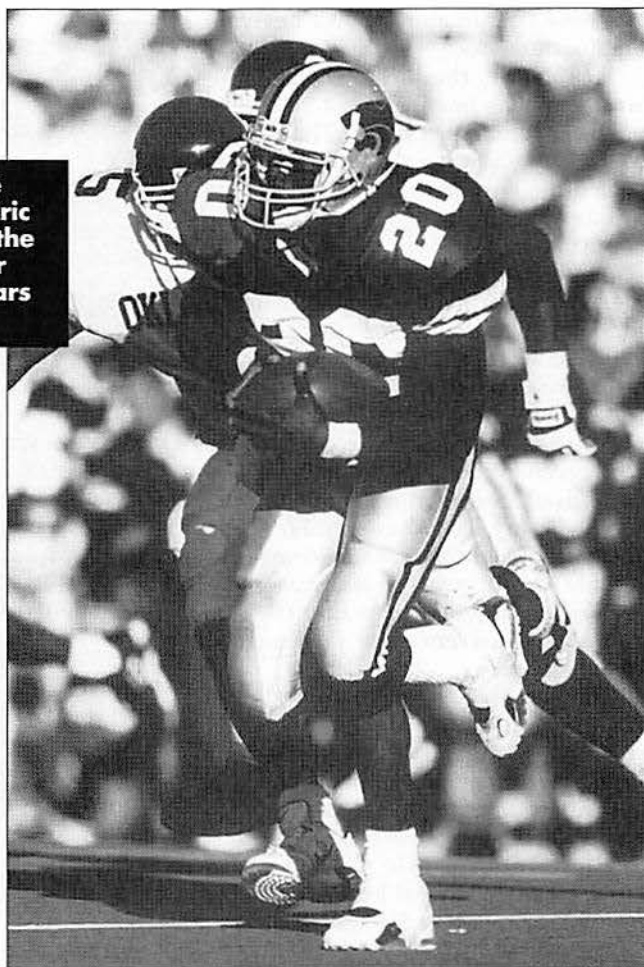
"We've got guys that are so athletic it's scary," Wiren said. "Each year they get more athletic and more skilled. That makes me nervous because, hopefully, I can hang on to my spot."

Still, four starters must be replaced among the front seven. Snyder experimented with fullback Brian Goolsby (6-foot-3, 245 pounds) and offensive tackle Damian McIntosh (6-5, 290) on the defensive line during the spring.

There sighs of relief were almost audible last December when quarterback Brian Kavanagh relieved injured Matt Miller in the Holiday Bowl. Miller went down with a serious neck injury early in the second quarter. Kavanagh, who had thrown only 64 passes in his career, completed 18-of-24 for 242 yards and four touchdowns in a 54-21 victory over the Rams.

Kavanagh, who will become a starter for the first time as a senior, did nothing to diminish his promise in the

Running backs Mike Lawrence (right) and Eric Hickson combined for the best rushing total for Kansas State in 13 years with 1,415 yards.



Bob Berry

spring game. He threw for 453 yards and five touchdowns.

Kavanagh's backup Cody Lee Smith could ultimately challenge for the No. 1 spot in the fall. Smith was a highly rated junior college transfer from Mount San Antonio Junior College last year but was diagnosed with Ruminant Syndrome.

The extremely rare disease doesn't allow its victims to digest their food. Smith was constantly throwing up and, consequently, losing weight.

The disease has been brought under control and K-State has petitioned the NCAA for an extra year of eligibility for Smith, a senior.

Whoever is the starting quarterback will operate behind what could be the best offensive line of the Snyder era. Three returners — guards Kendyl Jacox, Ross Greenwood and center Jason Johnson — have combined to start 56 games the past two seasons.

They were the heart of the line that sprung Wildcat rushers for 1,893 yards last

season, the most in 13 years in Manhattan.

"We have a lot of well-rounded offensive linemen now," Johnson said. "People

aren't as one-dimensional as they were when I got here."

Snyder has been a master at developing offensive lines. He earned his reputation as an

Cornerback Chris Canty was selected as an All-American as a sophomore. Canty intercepted eight balls last year, tied for best in the nation.



Bob Berry

offensive coordinator at Iowa developing quarterbacks.

At K-State, the buzz word is balance. Snyder's linemen must be able to pass block and run block. There were 211 less pass attempts than runs last year but 633 more yards were gained through the air.

Kavanaugh's main target will be senior Kevin Lockett who led the Big Eight with 56 catches. No player in Big Eight history had more yards (2,150) and catches (145) than Lockett after his junior season. Lockett can jump, run and grab the ball in traffic.

The challenge will be coming up with receiving depth, with Lockett sure to be double-teamed a lot this season. Senior Jimmy Dean has sprinter speed and caught eight passes for 76 yards as K-State's fourth receiver last season.

Starting running backs Eric Hickson and Mike Lawrence are faceless but effective.

They combined for 1,415 yards last season, part of the Big Eight's worst running game. But that statistic is deceiving. Both share time at halfback and run tough, coming up with clutch yards.

Hickson ran for 816 yards, the second-best rushing total by a sophomore in K-State history. He had five 100-yard rushing days and finished with a school record 5.2-yard average.

Six defensive starters return, including three-fourths of the secondary that led the Big Eight in pass efficiency defense.

Safety Mario Smith, the forgotten man in the secondary, was second in tackles with 95 and averaged 11 per game in conference play. Corner Joe Gordon is a two-time All-Big Eight performer.

If he makes the first All-Big 12 team, Gordon would be the first player secondary guy from a Big Eight school to do it three times in a row since Colorado's Chris Hudson, the 1994 Jim Thorpe Award winner.



KSU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ GET ROLLING EARLY

Kansas State's schedule is extremely favorable, at least in the early going. KSU hosts Texas Tech, Indiana State and Cincinnati and then travels to Rice. Those four tests are expected to prepare Kansas State for its fifth game against Nebraska.

■ BACK, BACK, BACK

The K-State secondary should be among the nation's best, returning All-American Chris Canty and All-Big Eight performers Joe Gordon (first team) and Mario Smith (honorable mention). The secondary will have to play solid behind a front seven that lost five starters.

■ THE AIR UP THERE

The Brian Kavanaugh to Kevin Lockett connection will have to be big as the KSU running game lacks the punch of other teams in the Big 12.

Canty is a pure cover guy with 4.4 speed. His eight interceptions tied for the national lead. Canty had such a successful sophomore year that he considered coming out early for the NFL draft.

"I thought about foregoing my two years but I thought about the stuff I wanted to do," Canty said. "I really haven't accomplished a lot of the goals I set for myself."

The special teams are mostly mediocre. Kicker Martin Gramatica has attempted only 19 field goals in his two-year career, making 13. Punter James Garcia averaged 41.5 yards and fell one punt short of qualifying for NCAA statistics. Canty should be the most dazzling special teams player as he steps in for the departed Mitch Running.

The defense should approach the accomplishments of last year's stifling group.

The offense should be OK with Kavanaugh. Miller guided the No. 9 scoring offense (36.5 points) last year, and Kavanaugh has many of those same weapons.

Detractors like to allege that Snyder has done it with mirrors. Snyder softened the non-conference schedule to Charmin-like quality but, especially in

the early years.

This year's non-conference schedule includes Indiana State, Cincinnati and Rice.

K-State will play in the first Big 12 game ever when Texas Tech comes to Manhattan on Aug. 31. The other South Division foes on the Wildcats' schedule are Texas A&M and Oklahoma.

The difference between a second straight 10-victory season and a fourth straight nine-victory season might be Nebraska. The Wildcats get the Huskers at home this year on Oct. 5.

Will the Big Red win or will K-State finally defeat the Big Red One? ■

KANSAS STATE TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	83	Kevin Lockett	6-1	180	Sr.	DE	44	Nyle Wiren	6-1	250	Sr.
	88	Troy Hackney	6-1	200	So.		53	Mike Bush	6-3	230	So.
LT	75	Todd Weiner	6-5	280	Jr.	DT	99	Andrew Timmons	6-3	280	Sr.
	77	Damian McIntosh	6-5	290	Fr.		93	Jason Hogaboom	6-1	270	Fr.
LG	79	Ross Greenwood	6-4	300	Sr.	DT	96	Lance Grace	6-1	275	Fr.
	68	Brian O'Neil	6-3	275	Sr.	-or-	72	Brook Stefan	6-3	285	Sr.
C	64	Jason Johnson	6-3	275	Sr.	DE	49	Darren Howard	6-4	235	Fr.
	73	Toosavili Ulutu	6-1	290	Sr.		45	Thad Swazer	6-4	250	Sr.
RG	74	Kendyl Jacox	6-2	320	Jr.	LB	50	Travis Ochs	6-3	225	So.
	78	Jeremy Martin	6-3	300	So.		45	Joe Bob Clements	6-3	225	So.
RT	76	Ryan Young	6-6	320	So.	LB	8	DeShawn Fogle	6-2	235	Sr.
	70	Ian Moses	6-3	290	Fr.		42	Mark Simoneau	6-0	225	Fr.
TE	86	Justin Swift	6-4	245	So.	LB	41	Turrelle Williams	6-2	220	Fr.
	82	Jarrett Grosdidier	6-5	250	Jr.		56	Jabbar Williams	6-3	230	Sr.
QB	12	Brian Kavanaugh	6-3	220	Sr.	CB	2	Chris Canty	5-10	190	Jr.
	3	Cody Lee Smith	6-3	200	Sr.		9	Monty Spiller	6-0	185	Jr.
FB	30	Brian Goolsby	6-3	235	Fr.	FS	4	Mario Smith	6-0	190	Sr.
	27	Matt Gangwish	5-11	225	So.		5	David Conley	6-2	200	So.
RB	24	Eric Hickson	5-10	195	Jr.	SS	17	Lamar Chapman	6-1	175	Fr.
	20	Mike Lawrence	5-10	190	Jr.		7	Clyde Johnson	5-10	200	Sr.
WR	22	Jimmy Dean	5-10	190	Sr.	CB	1	Joe Gordon	5-9	180	Sr.
	25	Andre Anderson	5-10	190	Jr.		29	Demetric Denmark	5-9	175	Jr.
PK	10	Martin Gramatica	5-9	160	Jr.	P	16	James Garcia	6-2	195	So.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



Running back Brock Olivo is proof that talent can be attracted to an always-rebuilding Missouri.

MISSOURI

BY DENNIS DODD

M

issouri has finally gotten it. The light bulb has blinked on above someone's head. There is a plan. There is hope.

Missouri officials have figured out the '90s equation to major college football success: Facilities equal recruits; quality recruits equal winning.

The Missouri Board of Curators in April approved the first phase of athletic facility construction, a \$24 million project that will include a new 100-yard indoor practice facility among other amenities.

While the strategy probably won't cure Missouri's 12-year itch for winning football right away, it does give the program a direction.

Missouri Coach Larry Smith has complained long and loud about the facilities, once saying some Texas high schools had better facilities than Missouri.

Seventeen players who started at least five games are returning. Recruiting is getting better. Attendance is,

amazingly, hanging on. The administration decided what held the program back was a lack of big-time facilities.

"It's a tremendous aid in recruiting," Smith said. "As soon as those architects have those plans drawn, I'm going to have renderings and drawings. They're (recruits) going to see it all."

Still, Missouri fans may still have to grit their teeth a few more years to see tangible results. The curators were so strong in their feelings that president Fred Hall wants to extend Smith's contract beyond 1998 so he can take advantage of Missouri's broad vision.

"We have really wasted two or three years here," Hall said in referring to Smith's first two years at the school that resulted in a 6-16-1 record. "He may need a couple of extra years, minimum, to prove that he can bring Missouri a competitive program."

"I hate to see our boys go out there and get kicked around the field, give all their heart and still come up with losing seasons. I want to give them a chance to have

those winning seasons."

The difference over the previous 12 consecutive losing seasons is that this time, the administration is driving the plan. From the time then-chancellor Barb Uehling intervened in December 1984 and delayed the hiring process to replace Warren Powers, Missouri has stumbled.

Missouri fans don't need to be reminded again that both Kansas and Kansas State became success stories while its school plodded along in a state with more population and support but less to offer to its recruits.

The result has been the exodus of in-state talent. Former Miami All-America defensive lineman Rusty Medearis, a native of Ozark, Mo., said the facilities "were the worst in the Big Eight" during his official visit. Current Nebraska defensive lineman Grant Wistrom, from Webb City, Mo., had to turn down Smith.

"Yes, it (facilities) does make a difference," said Clayton Baker, Missouri's junior defensive back. "I'm going to get treated the way I want to get treated. Whenever you're recruited, you're put on that pedestal. You kind of have feelings like, 'If this is the way I'm treated, this is the school I want to go to.'"

Smith was the third coach asked to oversee the reclamation. His first two teams finished 3-8-1 and 3-8, making it eight consecutive years that Missouri had failed to win more than four games.

Slowly, Smith's philosophy is taking root. The defense

jumps up a notch. In a league like this you better be ready to play every Saturday."

If Missouri is going to turn things around this season, Baker and the rest of the secondary will have to lead the way. The four starters are the best group at Missouri since future NFL players Eric Wright (San Francisco 49ers), Johnnie Poe (New Orleans Saints) and Bill Whitaker (Packers, Cardinals) played together in 1980.

Senior safety DeMontie Cross, an All-Big 12 candidate, led the Tigers with 144 tackles last season. Corners Shad Criss and Baker are two of the best cover men in the league. Sophomore safety Caldrinoff Easter showed promise in the 1995 season finale, returning an interception 51 yards for a touchdown against Iowa State.

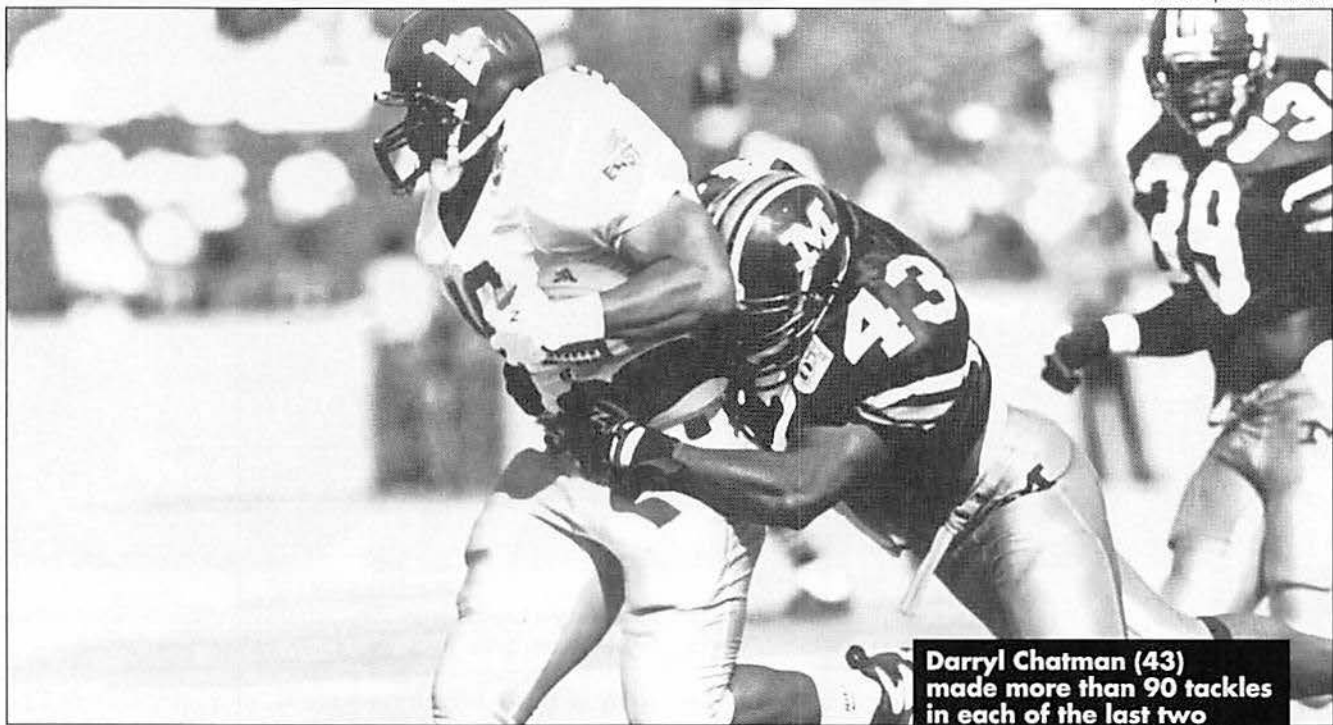
Wright, now a receivers coach for the Tigers, still offers pointers to the new generation.

"Whenever he talks, he has my utmost attention," Baker said. "I tune everything out and listen to everything he says. He played 10 years in the NFL and has four Super Bowl rings. The man knows what he is talking about. How could you sit there and say, 'Whatever ...' and go on?"

The defensive line is a weak spot. Four new starters will take over in the line where NFL draftee Steve Martin played last year.

The most promising might be sophomore defensive tackle Tim Mittelstadt.

Missouri Sports Information



Darryl Chatman (43) made more than 90 tackles in each of the last two seasons, but will have to rebound from a pair of shoulder injuries that kept him out during the spring.

is hard-hitting, although slow. The running game (No. 27 in the nation) is starting to resemble the punishing USC ground game that Smith developed in Los Angeles.

Improvement was coming in baby steps even before Missouri made the facilities commitment. The Tigers looked like a legitimate Big Eight team the last half of 1995. In the last four weeks of the season, Missouri led Kansas at halftime; dominated Oklahoma before losing late, 13-9; shut down Colorado defensively in Boulder; and routed Iowa State, 45-31.

Still, entering his third season, Smith knows he has miles to travel before running with the big dogs.

"This is the toughest schedule we've played since I've been here," Smith said. "The whole quality of the league

The blue-chip recruit from Kansas City was forced to play as a freshman because of injuries. In six starts, Mittelstadt made 32 tackles, forced and recovered a fumble.

The offense has averaged only 17.1 points in Smith's two seasons. But don't blame junior Brock Olivo. One of the first things Smith did when he arrived in December 1993 was sign Olivo, a native son (Washington, Mo.) who stayed home. In his first two seasons, Olivo has become the heart and soul of the program with his work ethic. Last season, Olivo came within 15 yards of a 1,000 and was the Big Eight's No. 5 rusher. He needs 1,009 to

become Missouri's all-time leading rusher.

Led by Olivo, Missouri should have a deep stable of running backs. Olivo will be pushed by senior Kenyetta Williams, sophomore Devin West (5.1-yard average) and incoming freshman Ricardo Rhodes, the St. Louis high school Player of the Year.

Sophomore Corby Jones goes into fall drills as the No. 1 quarterback. His redshirt was taken off midway through his freshman season when Brandon Corso was injured and, ultimately, couldn't get the offense moving.

At times, Jones performed like a raw freshman thrown into the fire. He completed only 14 passes (of 42 attempts) in six games. But Jones is as tough as any running back. He was second in rushing with 368 yards, the third-best total by a freshman in school history.

"I've gotten a lot more comfortable," Jones said. "Some of the people have a lot more confidence in me that I can get the job done. I have to work on throwing. Running is a God-given talent. When I feel I need to run, I'm going to."

The passing game will have to improve. There are no clear-cut starting receivers although junior college transfers Ricky Ross and Torey Coleman should help. Only four teams in the country averaged less passing yards than Missouri (101.7) last season.

Smith recruited well despite the findings of recruiting experts who put the class at the bottom of the Big 12. Rhodes, is a Troy Davis type (5-5, 185) with 4.4 speed.

Linebacker Barry Odom committed to Missouri before getting his anesthetic for knee surgery in June 1995. Odom injured his knee as a freshman, played with it his entire high school career and had surgery after he graduated. Odom then sat out a semester to rehab the knee before enrolling in January.

Junior college transfer Matt Hawkes is 23, has been on



MU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ THE LONG HAUL

Missouri is one of five Division I-A programs that have recorded 12 consecutive losing seasons. If the corner is to be turned, it won't be this year. But the basis begins this year. If the Tigers are going to nab top recruits, good showings are a must.

■ STOP THE EXODUS

Head coach Larry Smith will have to keep his players happy and keep them around for the full season. Quarterbacks Brandon Corso (early graduation) and Misael Alvarado (transferred) both elected not to continue at Missouri.

■ DOING IT WITH D

If Missouri can keep games low scoring, the Tigers will have a shot to win as they did against North Texas (28-7) and did in losses to Bowling Green (17-10) and Oklahoma (13-9).

his Mormon mission and has two years of eligibility. He was close to winning an inside linebacker spot in the spring.

Outside linebacker Sam Josue, a Pitt signee out of Miami North High School, missed by a geometry class of qualifying in 1994. Missouri started recruiting him when he attended nearby Kemper Military Academy in Boonville, Mo. Josue, who had 90 tackles for Kemper last season, was challenging for a starting spot.

The presence of those two speedy linebackers should help what has been a slow-footed group. But the Tigers will have to inside linebacker Darryl Chatman, possibly the team's hardest hitter, who sat out the spring recovering from shoulder surgery.

The kicking game has to get better. Jason Smith set a school record with 79 punts (for only a 36.5-yard average) and was nominated by one local columnist as Missouri's Heisman Trophy candidate. Mark Norris was steady (nine of 13) but didn't make a field goal beyond 41 yards.

Smith brought in two candidates to challenge the incumbents. Incoming freshman Vince Sebo averaged 46 yards per punt at Fort Monmouth Prep School last year. Kicker Mike Gauthier comes from the same high school,

Mesa (Ariz.) Dobson as USC record holder Quin Rodriguez. Rodriguez set the USC career field goal record under Smith, 57. Gauthier was 17-of-26 in his career, all nine misses were from beyond 50 yards.


Athletic Director Joe Castiglione's master plan calls for a \$100 million list of goodies that includes a new basketball arena that should be completed in 1999. Permanent lights were installed to help attendance and enhance Missouri's TV possibilities.

What this has to do with football is written in the success stories at Kansas and Kansas State. The improvement of those programs in recent years is tied directly to facility upgrades. ■

MISSOURI TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	82	Lou Shepherd	6-0	214	Sr.	LE	59	Brian Crancraft	6-3	249	Jr.
	26	Martez Young	6-1	182	So.		92	Eric Douglas	6-5	259	Sr.
RT	69	Todd Neimeyer	6-5	277	So.	DG	93	Jeff Marriott	6-5	262	Fr.
	57	Craig Heimburger	6-3	293	So.		79	Tim Mittelstadt	6-6	253	So.
RG	70	Cliff Smith	6-5	264	So.	NT	97	Donnell Jones	6-4	266	Jr.
	67	Tim Ridgley	6-4	276	Fr.		76	Rob Riti	6-3	256	Fr.
C	50	Russ Appel	6-3	255	Sr.	RE	90	Justin Wyatt	6-4	251	So.
	52	Michael Valadez	6-2	283	Fr.		46	Brett Liebke	6-3	248	So.
LG	62	Mike Morris	6-3	281	Jr.	OLB	49	Ramone Budgetts	6-2	231	So.
	73	Mitch Henderson	6-3	256	Jr.		56	Shawn Sundall	6-2	228	Jr.
LT	61	Travis Biebel	6-4	265	Jr.	ILB	30	Kevin Ford	6-1	220	Jr.
	64	Mitch Henderson	6-3	256	Jr.		53	Jaime Morris	6-1	224	Jr.
TE	85	Bill Lingerfelt	6-4	249	Sr.	ILB	45	Joe Love	6-2	220	Sr.
	88	Jake Steuve	6-3	242	So.		49	Justin Carter	6-2	220	Fr.
FL	81	Jay Murchison	6-1	185	Jr.	HB	5	Shad Criss	5-10	173	Jr.
	87	Eddie Brooks	6-1	204	So.		15	Stephen Scott	6-1	183	Fr.
QB	7	Corby Jones	6-1	216	So.	CB	26	Clayton Baker	5-10	176	Sr.
	18	Kent Skornia	6-4	199	So.		21	Randy Potter	5-10	175	So.
TB	27	Brock Olivo	6-1	210	Jr.	FS	22	Harold Piersey	6-2	183	So.
	32	Devin West	6-2	217	So.		29	Stevonne Wortham	6-0	180	So.
FB	34	Ron Hanes	6-3	225	Jr.	SS	20	Caldrinoff Easter	5-10	186	So.
	22	Ernest Blackwell	6-3	249	Jr.		12	Terrence Binion	6-3	187	Jr.
PK	16	Mark Norris	6-3	186	Jr.	P	25	Jason Smith	5-9	168	So.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



Thompson nearly doubled his sophomore stats last year rushing for 1,509 yards and eight scores.

OKLAHOMA STATE

BY RHETT MORGAN

W

hat abolition was to slavery and suffrage was to women, Nov. 11, 1995 was to Oklahoma State.

On that day in Norman, the Cowboys put down nearly two decades of derision and condescension from their neighbor to the south, beating the University of Oklahoma (12-0) for the first time since 1976.

Adults wept. Players hugged. Aggies gloated. Everyone except OSU's Bob Simmons.

As a head coach, watershed victories were new to him. But as an assistant coach, he was used to piercing such barriers.

"From where I came from, there always was a team you shot for," said Simmons, a former aide at Bowling Green, Toledo, West Virginia and Colorado. "At West Virginia, it was Penn State. At Colorado, it was Nebraska.

"Here, naturally, it is OU. But I don't want to base my program on beating OU. You can't go 1-11 and expect to

be successful. You have to beat everyone on your schedule."

The Cowboys appear incapable of that this season, especially in the inaugural year of the Big 12 Conference. But boosted by another solid recruiting class, ranked second in the league by *The Dallas Morning News*, OSU could be talking bowl game for the first time in eight years.

Fourteen starters, eight on offense, return for the Cowboys, whose 4-8 season came exceedingly close to being 7-5.

OSU lost four games — three to ranked foes Kansas, Kansas State and Colorado — after being tied or leading in the fourth quarter.

"You were dealing with a team that was learning how to win," Simmons said. "We looked at every game and had to stress the positive."

Particularly stinging was the defeat at Tulsa, where OSU blew a 20-point lead in the last 5:12 minutes in losing, 24-23.



Simmons would like to see quarterback Tone Jones engineer wins, like the 12-0 victory over Oklahoma last year, on a more consistent basis.

"Had we been able to come up with plays, you could have tacked on three more victories," he said. "Had we been smart against Tulsa, you could have tacked on four more victories. There was a silver lining there."

As there is to this season. The positives begin with first-team All-Big Eight tailback David Thompson. Nearly doubling his output from the previous year, the senior was second in the league in rushing a year ago, running for 1,509 yards (5.8 average) and eight touchdowns.

"I still don't think I did anything spectacular," he said. "People keep reminding me that, 'You did this. You did this.' It hasn't been done for so long."

"The way I look at it, I should have done it last year."

It took failure for Thompson to become a success.

Nagged by injuries during 1995 spring drills, he was outplayed at tailback by then-sophomore Andre Richardson, the reigning conference Freshman of the Year. Thompson became so inspired that mere reminders of his teammate left him seething.

Fred Pottorf

"That's like putting nitro in your tank," said Thompson, who wears No. 28. "When I came home (to Okmulgee, Okla.), I saw a No. 25 (Richardson's) jersey in a Wal-Mart. I thought to myself, 'I'm from here. Can I get a 28?'"

"I used everything to compare Andre and me and it fired me up."

Previously not known as a breakaway runner in college, Thompson last season busted out for several runs of 50-plus yards, including 57 against Southwest Missouri State, 79 against Nebraska and 91 against Kansas State. The jaunt against K-State was the

third-longest in OSU history.

To prepare for the 1996 season, Thompson ran track at OSU in the winter.

"David has a drive in him that started last year," Cowboys second-year coach Bob Simmons said. "He changed his body and he changed his focus. He set his goals high and set out to reach them. He didn't live off his laurels."

Richardson (705 yards, four touchdowns) again will back up Thompson, as will senior Boogie Johnson and redshirt freshman Nathan Simmons, son of the coach.

At tight end, Alonzo Mayes (6-foot-6, 265 pounds) is as athletic as he is large. After catching only one pass the previous season, the junior had 32 receptions for 421 yards, a school-high for a tight end.

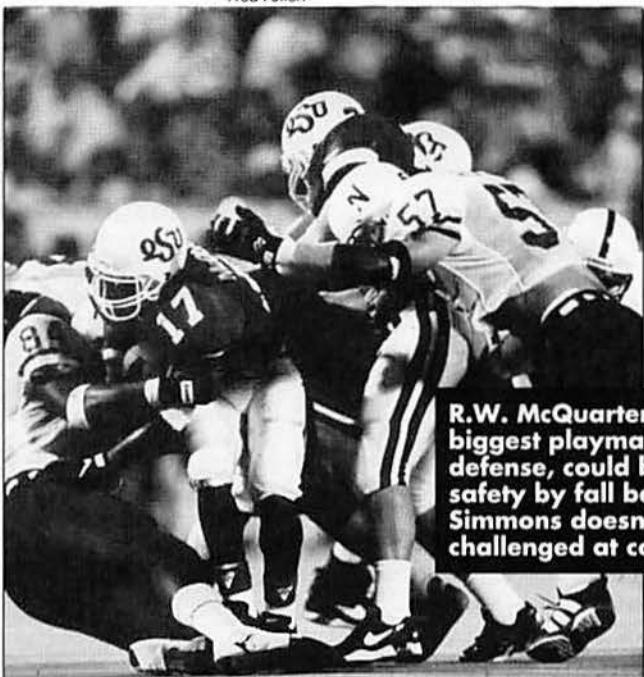
"He is a talented young man," Simmons said. "You don't see many guys that big who runs like he does."

Soothing the coach more than anything, however, is stability at quarterback.

For the first time in three years, starter Tone Jones could provide help to a passing game which ranked seventh in the conference last year. Jones, who completed only 47 percent of his attempts and threw three 11 interceptions, will get competition from junior-college transfer Joe Phears and Chris Chaloupka, a redshirt freshman from Angleton, Texas.

Arriving in the fall will be Denver freshman Tony Lindsay, who

chose OSU over Nebraska.



R.W. McQuarters (17), the biggest playmaker on defense, could be moved to safety by fall because Simmons doesn't feel he's challenged at corner.

Phears and Chaloupka demonstrated during the spring that they are capable of playing at this level.

"I'm very excited about this football team and the opportunities we have in the fall," said Jones, who had a team-high 10 rushing touchdowns last season. "I'm a lot more comfortable. When a quarterback is comfortable, he doesn't force things."

Simmons agreed.

"We should be stronger there because we have a guy (Jones) with some experience," Simmons said. "Now he has to realize the value of his experience and work on his weaknesses."

"Joe is still a long way off. But he showed he has the talent we saw in junior college. Chaloupka has some talent. I really feel better about that position. (New quarterbacks coach) Ron Calcagni has brought in some things that have really simplified things and helped our kids."

OSU remains remarkably young at wideout, where sophomores Terrance Richardson (10 catches) and Willie Grissom (16) split duties with senior Kent Luck and sophomore Sean Love. Among those who could break through at the position are speedster Tank Coleman and 6-3 Cameron White, both redshirt freshmen.

The fullback slot could be up for grabs, with sophomore Brian Aikens, who played six games as a rookie, possibly battling it out with freshmen Eric Stevenson and Kevin Brown.

The offensive line could be in flux. Center Bryan Hope graduated and Bryan Guillory, who started eight games at left guard, was suspended for the season for violating a team policy. Reserve guard Jim Villanueva left the team during the spring because of personal reasons.

Derek Leinen and Calvin Menephee are back to anchor the tackle spots. But to plug the other holes, OSU plans to move freshman Adam Davis from tight end to guard,



OSU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ QB SEARCH

The Cowboys are still looking for a quarterback to fill the cleats Mike Gundy hung up in 1989. Whether it's Jones or someone else, OSU needs to get production if it hopes to go over .500.

■ HOME COOKING

OSU has seven home games, playing three of its first four in Stillwater against beatable opponents Southwest Missouri (Division I-AA), Tulsa and Utah State. The Cowboys also have Texas A&M and Oklahoma at home and Texas Tech at a neutral site (Texas Stadium) in Dallas. The Pokes also drew two of the worst teams in the league's Northern Division: Iowa State and Missouri.

■ BRAIN HEMMORHAGE

Mental lapses cost the Cowboys at least four games last year. They've got to play every quarter in 1996.

Jeremy Offutt from tackle to guard and Josh Henson from guard to center.

Sophomore R.W. McQuarters is the biggest playmaker on defense.

The cornerback led the club in interceptions (three) and topped the league in kickoff returns with a 23.9 average. But he loves to hit, and for that reason, Simmons is contemplating putting him at safety.

The rest of the unit has holes but could be better than a year ago because of improved speed.

In lineman Lorenzo Green, Norman Williams and outside linebacker Jevon Langford, who declared early for the NFL draft, the Cowboys lose about 186 tackles from a year ago.

Back, however, are linemen Jay Grosfield and sophomore Jamal Williams, who Simmons said can be a dominant player. Help will come from Tennessee transfer Brandon Ashley, Kerry Linneer, who signed originally with Ole Miss, and the Ensey twins, sophomores Billy and Russell. The staff also is high on first-year player Denishio Cook, a 6-4, 280-pound tackle from Stillwater.

Inside linebacker returns sophomores Billy Stone, Josh Green and Taber LeBlanc, and the outside backers feature returnee Louis Adams, highly-touted sophomore Tarrell Knauls, as well as classmates Andre Waddle and Jermaine Birdow. The athletic Knauls and Adams give the Cowboys' bookend blitzers.

Burned continually a year ago, the secondary should be better. Seniors dot four of the top five spots: strong safety Courtney Garner, left corner Jitu Criddle and free safeties Trent Fisher and Kevin Williams. Criddle has been timed at 4.32 seconds in the 40-yard dash by pro scouts but needs work on his tackling.

Aptly, OSU's Achilles heel may be its kicking game. The Cowboys must replace their deep snapper, place-kicker Lawson Vaughn and punter Greg Ivy, who led the conference in that category a year ago. ■

OKLAHOMA ST. TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

TE	85	Alonzo Mayes	6-6	265	Jr.	LE	96	Jay Grosfield	6-4	255	Sr.
	89	Jack Golden	6-3	225	So.		55	Russell Ensey	6-3	260	So.
LT	64	Derek Leinen	6-4	292	Sr.	NG	99	Jamal Williams	6-3	260	So.
	74	Chris Lewis	6-4	260	So.			Courtney Mallory	6-3	255	Fr.
LG		David Camacho	6-8	310	Jr.	RE	66	Billy Ensey	6-3	260	So.
	86	Adam Davis	6-6	240	Fr.			Brandon Ashley	6-5	255	Jr.
C	62	Josh Henson	6-2	250	Sr.	OLB	2	Louis Adams	6-1	225	Sr.
	51	David Snow	6-1	260	Jr.		88	Tarrell Knauls	6-3	220	So.
RG	70	Jeremy Offutt	6-5	260	So.	OLB	42	Andre Waddle	6-2	225	So.
	73	Blaine Cook	6-4	255	Fr.		33	Jermaine Birdow	6-4	215	So.
RT	71	Calvin Menephee	6-2	320	Jr.	WLB	44	Billy Stone	6-1	230	So.
	77	Andrew Golembewski	6-5	265	Fr.		52	Ryan Cambern	5-11	220	Sr.
WR	19	Kent Luck	5-8	175	Sr.	SLB	54	Josh Green	6-0	215	So.
	82	Adam Edwards	6-2	200	Fr.		53	Taber LeBlanc	6-3	235	So.
QB	9	Tone Jones	5-11	290	Sr.	LC	26	Jitu Criddle	6-1	185	Sr.
	11	Chris Chaloupka	6-3	195	Fr.		29	J.B. Flowers	6-2	180	Fr.
FB	30	Brian Aikens	6-1	245	So.	FS	15	Trent Fisher	6-2	180	Fr.
		Marcus Whitehead	6-2	215	So.		5	Kevin Williams	6-0	186	Sr.
TB	28	David Thompson	5-8	200	Sr.	SS	20	Courtney Garner	6-0	185	Sr.
	25	Andre Richardson	5-9	190	Jr.		10	Trent Alexander	6-0	175	So.
WR	24	Terrance Richardson	5-10	190	So.	RC	17	R.W. McQuarters	5-11	185	So.
	80	Willie Grissom	5-11	190	So.		20	Terrance Vaughn	5-7	170	Fr.
PK	31	Tim Sydnies	6-2	180	Fr.	P		Jason Davis	6-0	215	Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



Shon Mitchell (3) and
Ricky Williams
combined to rush for
2,089 yards, the
second best-tandem
total in school history.

TEXAS

BY BLAIN FOWLER

Despite a successful 1995 season, head coach John Mackovic is hesitant to look too far into the future. A national championship isn't his immediate goal. The first goal of the 1996 season would be to survive the season, especially the Big 12 conference schedule, unblemished.

"We have been pleased with our progress in the first four years of our program," Mackovic said. "Now, we have a year of new challenges and must raise the bar to the next level. We're always striving to improve, reaching for higher heights."

Finishing the 1996 season as impressively as the 1995 season will be difficult for Texas. Off the schedule are conference games against SMU, TCU, Rice and Houston, generally easy wins. Replacing the old foes are games against Colorado and Kansas as well as a potential Big 12 championship game.

Still on the schedule is the always tough game against

Oklahoma, this time with conference superiority residing on it. Oklahoma State and Missouri will provide tests Texas is unfamiliar with.

Also, not to be overlooked are non-conference games with Virginia and Notre Dame, two teams Texas did not exactly have an easy time with last season.

Gone are the traditional easy victories, but plenty of opportunity for wins exist in this season's schedule.

"We have to improve each week if we are to be successful next season," Mackovic said.

Texas returns 14 starters from last season — seven offensive, seven defensive — which should ease the minds of Longhorn fans in regards to the imposing schedule. But where Texas will have to fill losses and who will be filling those losses makes the schedule look that much more daunting.

"Our 1996 squad will have some question marks to be answered, but we return a great deal of experience and proven players," Mackovic said. "But we are going to

look to some freshmen for quality playing time next season."

The holes on offense can be plugged easily. Of the skill position players, only split end Justin McLeMore is gone. Filling the shoes of three lost offensive linemen will be a little more difficult.

With the departure of right guard Corby Brooks, left tackle Dominic Bustamante and left tackle John Elmore, Texas was left with some searching to do.

Octavious Bishop saw plenty of time last season at left tackle and will be the fix for Bustamante's loss. Bishop started once and rotated with Bustamante frequently and will have little trouble with the transition. Bishop injured his medial collateral ligament in the spring and was in therapy for several weeks following.

Ben Adams stepped to the forefront and proved that he belonged in the starting lineup. As a freshman, Adams served as backup to Brooks at right guard.

The right tackle job will be a battle between sophomore Jay Humphrey and junior Brent Kelly. The winner will have the added benefit of playing on the side of the line with more experience. To the winner's left will be senior All-American Dan Neil. At center, senior Ryan Fiebigler returns to the starting lineup.

After that, depth is thin. Little experience can be found behind that initial six.

Richard Walton, the backup quarterback, got to work with the first team offense for most of spring practice and said he is confident this group can protect the passer and open holes for the backs.

"I think we had a great spring for the offensive linemen," Walton said. "There weren't many of them, so the new guys got a whole lot of reps. I have confidence behind them."

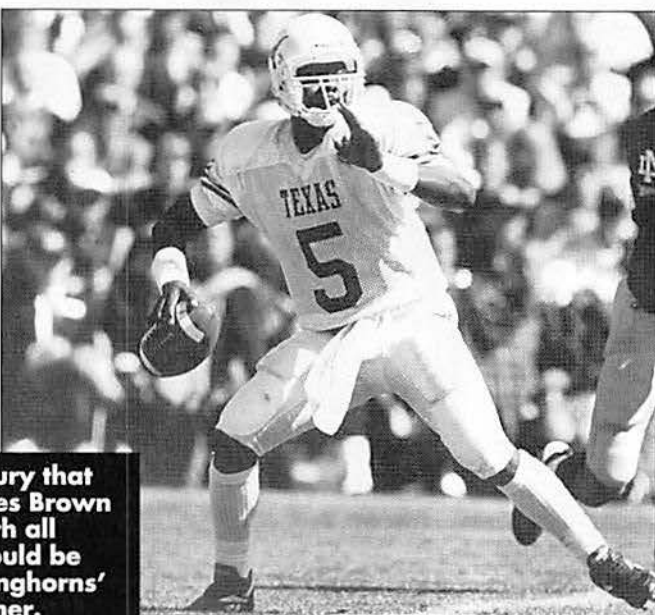
More importantly, will incumbent quarterback James Brown be able to have similar confidence behind this offensive line? Last year's line

The nagging injury that quarterback James Brown struggled with all last season should be healed by the Longhorns' season opener.

Four starters, all seniors, return in the Texas secondary, including strong safety Tre Thomas (17).

did a good job of protecting Brown, but Brown found himself hobbling at the end of nearly every game.

Brown will return in the fall completely healthy for the first time since the middle of last season. He struggled through shoulder and ankle injuries through the back



Matt Cashion

half of last season.

Despite the nagging injuries, Brown had an extremely successful 1995. His mobility made up for his lack of a strong throwing arm and kept defenses at bay. Brown completed 51 percent of his passes last season for 2,447 yards.

Brown's injury problem placed even more importance on Walton and Marty Cherry, the Longhorn backup quarterbacks. Both got to work with the first-team offense during the spring and benefited from the time with the first team.

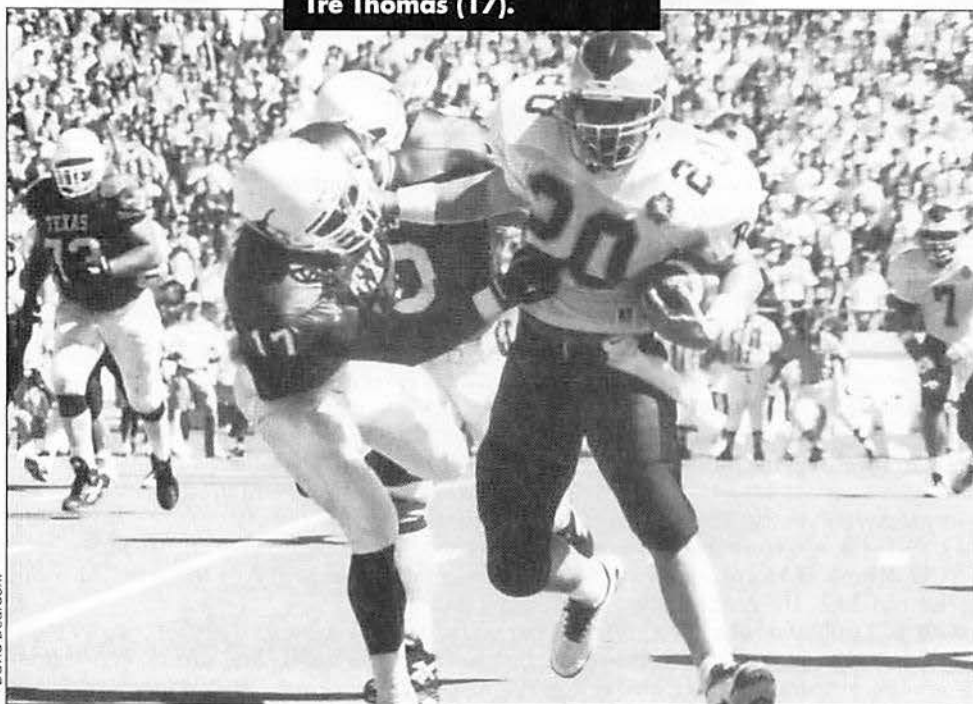
Walton understands that his time in the spotlight was limited to the spring.

"Right now, we are trying to get James back healthy," Walton said. Everyone expects us to win regardless of who is at quarterback. So we are hoping James can get back healthy; but if not, we are still expecting to win."

Whether Brown and Walton is at quarterback, the UT quarterback will have many receivers to throw to.

Mike Adams returns at flanker. He is joined by third-team All-American tight end Pat Fitzgerald. The receiving tandem is completed by Curtis Jackson. Jackson caught 27 balls in 1994 for 401 yards. Adams, Texas career leader in receiving yards, caught 53 passes for 876 yards in 1995. Fitzgerald added another 30 catches, 445 yards and eight touchdowns last season.

"Wide receiver is a position



David Deardorff

where we may have as good of a group as we have had in our five years here," Mackovic said. "Tight end should be an area that is really solid for us."

At running back, the Longhorns may be even deeper than at wide receiver. Shon Mitchell, a 1,000 yard rusher, returns for his senior season. Fullback Ricky Williams rushed for 990 yards last season as a true freshman. Joining this duo is Priest Holmes.

Holmes missed 1995 with a knee injury and is returning for his senior season. In 1994, Holmes started five times and rushed for 524 yards.

"I can't wait to see what this group of running backs can do," Holmes said. "Especially seeing last year, how good Shon and Ricky and the whole offensive line did, I'm excited to get down there with them."

The offense should continue to pack a punch. Last season, Texas averaged nearly 30 points per game. The Longhorns outscored opponents 104-45 in the third quarter.

The offense was joined by the defense in success. The Texas defense held opponents to 17 points per game, allowing just 30 points all season in the first quarter.

Much of the same is to be expected out of this defensive unit, but many youngsters will be counted on to contribute immediately.

The defensive line returns only Chris Akins at nose-guard. Akins split most of 1995 with Stonie Clark, but will be on his own this season. Finding replacements for end Tony Brackens and tackle Shane Rink wasn't a priority in the spring, but the first practice of fall will be important for finding the new starters at those positions.

Sophomores Gray Mosier (end) and Clarence Martin (tackle) have the early lead, simply by their spring participation. Four players who will challenge for the jobs won't arrive in Austin until late July.

Incoming freshmen Derrick Curry, Will Goodloe, Casey Hampton and Cedric Woodard will all get a



UT'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ STAYING HAPPY

Five wide receivers, two tight ends and three running backs, in addition to quarterback James Brown, will all want their share of carries. If the group isn't self-ish, as it appears to be, the Longhorns should benefit from the wealth of talent. If anyone gets jealous and wants the ball more, it could be a long season.

■ GREENER PASTURES

Texas' Memorial Stadium will feature grass for the first time in 1996. Last season, Texas was 10-1 on the artificial surface, and an undefeated 6-0 at home. The Longhorns were 1-1-1 on grass. This season, Texas will play eight of its games on grass.

■ FAB FRESHMEN

Finding defensive line replacements begins with four freshmen who will be expected to collectively fill the missing shoes of Tony Brackens.

chance at landing the starting spot.

"One of our biggest problems in the spring was numbers at defensive line," Mackovic said. "They had to do extra duty throughout the spring. But we expect the freshmen to come in and contribute immediately."

The linebackers remain solid. Tyson King and Kyle Richardson return at inside linebacker. Senior Jonathan Hickerson will be tagged the starter at drop outside linebacker. Freshman Damon Luckett and sophomore Mark Kuper will compete for the rush outside linebacker spot in the fall.

"Tyson King returns, and he has been a starter for us the last two seasons while Kyle Richardson has been a starter for a season and a half, so they know what they are doing," Mackovic said.

The secondary is Texas' most solid defensive unit. All four starters return from last season. Chris Carter seems to be all over the field at free safety. Tre Thomas is a quiet player that always gets the job done at strong safety. Bryant Westbrook is a huge hitter at left corner, and Taje Allen is a speed burner at right corner.

All seniors, the UT defensive backs have started a combined 89 games and have 24 career interceptions.

"It seems like our defensive secondary has been here forever," Mackovic said. "We are going to count on their carrying a big load for our defense."

Texas has positioned itself in the driver's seat for the Big 12 Southern Division title race. *The Dallas Morning News* picked Texas as its preseason favorite to win the Big 12 South. But Mackovic isn't ready to pick up the champions trophy just yet.

"We have a lot of questions yet that we have to answer before we get to fall," he said. "We haven't made any bold definite decisions on everything, but we're beginning to move in a direction, and I am satisfied with where we are at right now." ■

TEXAS TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	39	Curtis Jackson	5-10	188	Sr.	DE	95	Gray Mosier	6-5	250	So.
	7	Courtney Epps	6-1	193	Jr.		54	Cory Davies	6-4	247	Sr.
RT	67	Jay Humphrey	6-7	287	So.	NG	96	Chris Akins	6-1	292	Jr.
	76	Brent Kelly	6-6	285	Jr.		61	Byron Lloyd	6-2	252	Jr.
RG	69	Dan Neil	6-2	285	Sr.	DT	90	Clarence Martin	6-3	292	So.
	54	Russell Gaskamp	6-4	290	So.		53	Melvin Jenkins	6-0	260	Jr.
C	58	Ryan Fiebigler	6-3	280	Jr.	OLB	43	Jonathan Hickerson	6-0	235	Sr.
	54	Russell Gaskamp	6-4	290	So.		93	Michael Boudoin	6-2	225	So.
LG	79	Ben Adams	6-5	298	So.	ILB	59	Kyle Richardson	6-0	230	Jr.
	65	Travis Wood	6-2	280	So.		46	Dusty Renfro	6-0	235	So.
LT	75	Octavious Bishop	6-5	308	So.	ILB	50	Tyson King	6-0	230	Sr.
	71	Keith Frierson	6-6	260	Fr.		55	Anthony Hicks	6-0	234	Fr.
TE	81	Pat Fitzgerald	6-2	225	Sr.	OLB	41	Mark Kuper	6-4	236	So.
	89	Steve Bradley	6-3	250	Sr.		92	Damon Luckett	6-2	231	Fr.
FL	83	Mike Adams	6-1	187	Sr.	CB	2	Taje Allen	5-11	188	Sr.
	86	Matt Davis	6-5	216	Jr.		31	Tony Holmes	5-9	185	So.
QB	5	James Brown	6-0	186	Sr.	CB	30	Bryant Westbrook	6-0	195	Sr.
	10	Richard Walton	6-5	217	So.		9	Quinton Wallace	6-0	195	Jr.
RB	3	Shon Mitchell	5-10	185	Sr.	FS	16	Chris Carter	6-1	200	Sr.
	33	Priest Holmes	5-10	200	Sr.		18	Cody Danaher	6-0	215	Sr.
RB	11	Ricky Williams	6-0	225	So.	SS	17	Tre Thomas	6-2	210	Sr.
	32	Jeffrey Clayton	5-10	220	Sr.		25	Robert Crenshaw	5-10	195	Sr.
PK	4	Phil Dawson	5-11	187	Jr.	P	15	Mark Schultis	6-1	195	Jr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



Keith Mitchell (23), an All-America candidate at outside linebacker, had 13 sacks last year to lead the Aggies.

TEXAS A&M

BY HOMER JACOBS

F

rom the road construction on Texas Avenue to the hard-hat areas around the budding new athletic complexes on the west side of campus, the warnings are everywhere in College Station:

Proceed with caution.

And so go the Aggies into the Big 12, confident they can become greased lightning by season's end, yet unsure what kind of horsepower really lies under the hood heading into the summer.

"I think there are a lot of unknowns about this team," coach R.C. Slocum said as he enters his eighth season at A&M. "I really don't know how to characterize it. We'll have a good defense, but there's so many questions (on offense)."

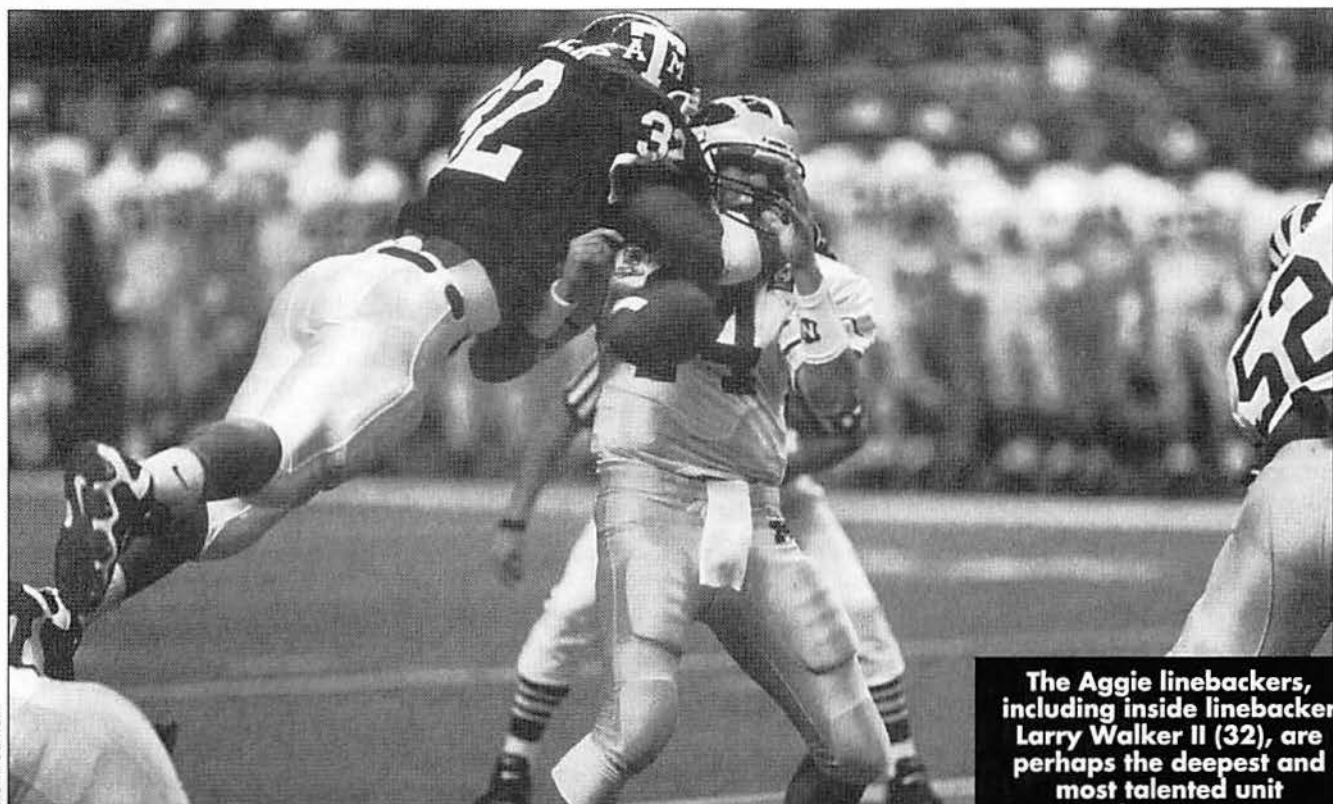
"The other side of the equation is going into a new league and playing new teams. I'm anxious to see how we stack up. I think we're going into it with a little bit of caution."

Indeed, the road to a Southwest Conference championship was like the Aggie autobahn — SMU, TCU, Rice and Houston, please move over to the slow lane and let the Ferrari pass.

But now in the nation's premier football conference, the Aggies' road to glory resembles more of a highway to hell with games against Colorado, Kansas State, Texas, and possibly, Nebraska in the Big 12 title game.

"Even though we had been through the Southwest Conference so many times, people kept on saying you're going to beat all the Southwest Conference teams again," said strong safety Typail McMullen, a senior who saw the Aggies lose two conference games in 1995 for the first time since 1990. "That's the good thing about the Big 12 — we'll have to be focused every week."

A&M, which finished 9-3 last season after a 22-20 victory over Michigan in the Builders Square Alamo Bowl, could have more talent across the board on this team than the one that had national title aspirations a year ago. Of



The Aggie linebackers, including inside linebacker Larry Walker II (32), are perhaps the deepest and most talented unit in the country.

course, the players on paper must translate to players on the field.

"We've got new guys in the offensive line, we've got young running backs and a new quarterback," Slocum said. "You're going into there with a lot of questions and new personalities. Too see how that all blends together and how effective it is remains to be seen."

But the Aggies, who have struggled offensively the last few years as defenses stacked the line to stop A&M's running backs, finally appear to have the skill players and an improving offensive line that can move the ball downfield. The Aggies averaged 27.7 points and 376.6 yards a game in '95.

At quarterback, where Corey Pullig was a four-year starter last fall, the Aggies have not officially named a starter. However, Brannndon Stewart, the transfer from Tennessee, should line up under center against BYU in the season opener.

If Stewart can have a repeat of his phenomenal high school career at Stephenville, where he passed for 2,558 yards and rushed for another 1,516 his senior year, the Aggies should have their most explosive offense in years.

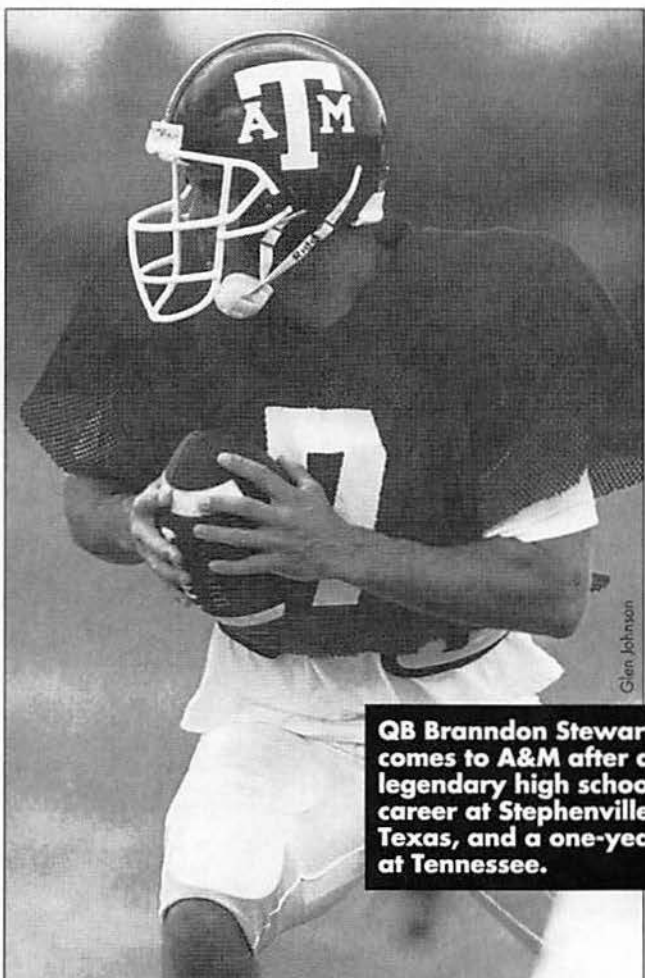
And, as opposed to most of this decade, Stewart will have several top receivers to find in the open field.

Senior Albert Connell, who caught 44 passes as a newcomer last year, again will be A&M's biggest threat at flanker. But also look for sophomore tight end Derrick Spiller to become a major player in the offense this fall.

The running game can be more balanced than in the McElroy era as A&M switches from its tradition I-formation to a split-back attack. Sophomore D'Andre Hardeman at the B-back, and sophomores Sirr Parker and Eric Bernard at A-back give the Aggies one of the deepest, yet youngest, running back pools in the Big 12.

"We're getting better," Slocum added. "And when you start looking at weapons... Do we have a threat at wide receiver? I think we do. Do we have a threat at tight end? I think we do. We've got threats at the running back position, and I think the quarterback is a guy on a down-to-down basis who will be capable of making plays, big plays. I think he's got a strong enough arm, and he has the ability to run for some yardage."

Last season, A&M lost three games to Colorado, Texas Tech and Texas when



Glen Johnson

QB Brannndon Stewart comes to A&M after a legendary high school career at Stephenville, Texas, and a one-year stint at Tennessee.

dropped passes, penalties (A&M committed a school record 108 in '95) and key turnovers haunted the Aggies. In fact, A&M easily could have been 10-0 heading into the finale with Texas. The preseason national title aspirations would have been intact.

"Those years come around every once in a while where things were just out of sync," Slocum said. "Last year, we had everything that could go wrong, go wrong. The No. 1 place we didn't need injury was with Leeland (McElroy), and we got him hurt. Our place-kicker went into a slump in the middle of the year. We had some dropped balls that normally we would have caught."

"You don't panic when that happens. It's the way it works. Every so often, you have one of those years."

Kevin Bartram



RB Sirr Parker is one of the young backs who will replace Leeland McElroy.

Whereas the A&M offense struggled last fall, the Wrecking Crew defense nearly finished the season as the nation's most dominating unit. A&M finished third overall in total defense, giving up 257.7 yards a game, and it was the only team in the country to finish in the top 10 in every defensive category kept by the NCAA.

Some NFL scouts claim the three seniors on the defensive line — left end Brandon Mitchell (6-foot-4, 275 pounds), nose guard Edward Jasper (6-4, 291) and right end Pat Williams (6-4, 275) — will be drafted next April. And rush linebacker Keith Mitchell is drawing All-America



A&M'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ OFFENSIVE LINE

The Aggies have been inconsistent in the offensive line the last two years as youth and inexperience has taken its toll. But with nine of 10 players returning off the depth chart, A&M is hoping the line can become a strength instead of a hindrance.

■ BALANCED OFFENSE

If quarterback Brannndon Stewart can ignite the passing game, A&M will have the weapons for an explosive offense. The days of defenses keying on the featured A&M tailback may be history.

■ CATCHING BREAKS

Last season, A&M lost two close games to Colorado and Texas Tech that could have easily gone the other way, but various freak plays and untimely turnovers killed the Aggies' hopes. If A&M can find some good luck, a great season seems imminent.

consideration after posting 13 sacks in 1995, one behind the nation's leader, Cornell Brown from Virginia Tech.

The A&M linebackers, which include inside standouts Dat Nguyen and Larry Walker II, and emerging superstar Warrick Holdman at the drop outside linebacker, comprise one of the nation's most complete units.

"If they stay healthy, they can be real good," Slocum said of his defense. "It's an absolute necessity that Donovan Greer comes back healthy and Andre Williams comes back healthy."

The two projected starters at cornerback — although sophomore Shun Horn is pushing hard for a starting role — are coming off reconstructive knee surgeries in the off-season. They're able to rebound to complement the play of McMullen and a potential impact player in sophomore Toya Jones at free safety will be a major key to the success of A&M in the Big 12.

The Aggies begin the season in the Pigskin Classic on Aug. 24, the earliest start for a college football season in NCAA history. On Sept. 28, the Aggies meet Colorado (ranked fourth in our preseason top-20 poll) at Kyle Field in the much-anticipated rematch of last year's shootout. It will be a game the

Aggies look forward to, but as opposed to last season, A&M's season will not hinge on this one game.

"I think our kids and our coaches learned a valuable lesson about last season," A&M defensive coordinator Phil Bennett said. "As a coach, we've got to make sure every game is important. When we play Colorado in the fourth game, that's going to be a big game. But it's also not going to be the end-all of our season."

"Everybody a year ago was asking, 'Are you excited about playing Colorado?' Right now, I'm excited about playing BYU. Regardless of who we're playing, whether it's USL or Louisiana Tech, we're going to stay focused on one game." ■

TEXAS A&M TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	1	Aaron Oliver	6-2	191	So.	LE	96	Brandon Mitchell	6-4	275	Sr.
	37	Donte Hawkins	6-1	185	So.		45	Brad Crowley	6-5	258	Jr.
RT	73	Cameron Spikes	6-5	292	So.	NG	95	Edward Jasper	6-4	291	Sr.
	74	Brandon Houston	6-6	292	So.		94	Zerick Rollins	6-3	255	Jr.
RG	54	Calvin Collins	6-3	290	Sr.	RE	99	Pat Williams	6-4	275	Sr.
	62	Semisi Heimuli	6-3	305	Fr.		97	Marcus Heard	6-3	289	Jr.
C	69	Koby Hackradt	6-5	271	Jr.	OLB	43	Warrick Holdman	6-1	223	So.
	52	David Vazquez	6-3	275	So.		51	Phillip Meyers	6-1	216	Jr.
LG	72	Steve McKinney	6-5	274	Jr.	ILB	32	Larry Walker II	6-2	231	Sr.
	68	Jake Horn	6-4	274	So.		28	Trent Driver	6-3	222	Jr.
LT	76	Chris Ruhman	6-6	290	Jr.	ILB	9	Dat Nguyen	6-1	213	So.
	53	Rex Tucker	6-6	255	So.		29	Quinton Brown	6-2	226	Jr.
TE	87	Derrick Spiller	6-3	227	So.	OLB	23	Keith Mitchell	6-3	223	Sr.
	82	Daniel Campbell	6-6	252	So.		55	Jimmie Irby	6-2	225	Sr.
FL	80	Albert Connell	6-2	180	Sr.	CB	21	Shun Horn	5-11	182	So.
	88	Leroy Hodge	6-3	200	Fr.		26	Andre Williams	5-9	176	Sr.
QB	7	Brannndon Stewart	6-3	210	Jr.	CB	27	Donovan Greer	5-10	178	Sr.
	5	Kevin Colon	6-3	179	So.		14	Justin Lucas	6-0	185	So.
RB	20	D'Andre Hardeman	5-11	225	So.	FS	5	Toya Jones	6-3	190	So.
	33	Marc Broyles	5-11	235	So.		11	Sherrod Wyatt	6-2	189	Sr.
RB	8	Sirr Parker	6-0	180	Fr.	SS	6	Typail McMullen	6-2	197	Sr.
	22	Eric Bernard	5-10	190	So.		48	Rich Coady	6-1	198	So.
PK	3	Kyle Bryant	5-7	180	Jr.	P	19	Shane Lechler	6-3	220	Fr.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



The Texas Tech offense centers around running back Byron Hanspard, who led the Red Raiders in both rushing and receiving in 1996.

TEXAS TECH

BY RUSTY BURSON

N

ot so long ago, Texas Tech fans would have looked at a schedule featuring games against five teams that finished the previous season in the top 15 and seven teams who were ranked in the top 25 at one time and thrown up their hands seeking mercy.

Even the most loyal Red Raider fans would have figured Texas Tech didn't have much of a prayer against such formidable foes.

But times — and attitudes — have changed on the plains of West Texas. The Red Raiders and their fans, who endured some rather lean years throughout much of the 1980s, now have an undeniable swagger in their step. It's the result of Tech attending three consecutive bowl games and finishing no worse than tied for runner-up in the now defunct Southwest Conference in each of the last five seasons.

Furthermore, these more confident Raiders are fresh off a No. 20 national ranking and a 9-3 season last year,

including wins in eight of their last nine games. And in the final four wins of '95, Tech averaged a mere 41 points per contest.

So while the 1996 schedule appears rather brutal with its murderous stretch of consecutive games against Baylor, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas A&M and Texas, the Red Raiders still figure they have a prayer at competing for the inaugural Big 12 championship. And not just because one of Tech's best players, junior running back Byron Hanspard, happens to be an ordained Pentecostal minister. Of course, that can't hurt.

"Certainly, we've made a little headway in recent years," said colorful Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes, who is entering his 10th full season as the Raiders' head coach. "We've continued to improve over the years, and we've been very competitive. We're not a powerhouse by any means, but at the very least we've come in from the out-house."

"I feel like we have a chance to be very competitive in

the Big 12. And if we do, we will gain some instant credibility. The good news about the Big 12 is that it is a very high profile conference with all those top 25 and top 10 teams. Of course, the bad news is that we're going to have to play all those people."

Texas Tech has been a team characterized by good news/bad news situations throughout the 1990s. For example, the good news for the Raiders is that they have finished at least tied for second in the SWC from 1991-95. The bad news, however, is the Raiders have only finished above .500 two times in the '90s.

Even last year — the Raiders' most productive season since 1989 — Tech was a good news/bad news team. The Red Raiders were extremely good in beating eighth-ranked Texas A&M early in the year and rolling up major offensive numbers late in the season. But the Raiders were rather anemic against Baylor and Texas, scoring just one touchdown each in losses to those schools.

"We had some inconsistent moments last year, but that's going to happen against good football teams," Dykes said. "Against Texas (in a 48-7 loss), it just seemed like we couldn't do anything right. But there were some games last year against some very good football teams where we didn't do much wrong."

"It's a hard game to figure sometimes. That's why I'm not in the predicting business. But we're ready to roll the dice again (this year) and see what happens. I don't know if we'll contend for the championship or not, but we feel like we have a little firepower of our own."

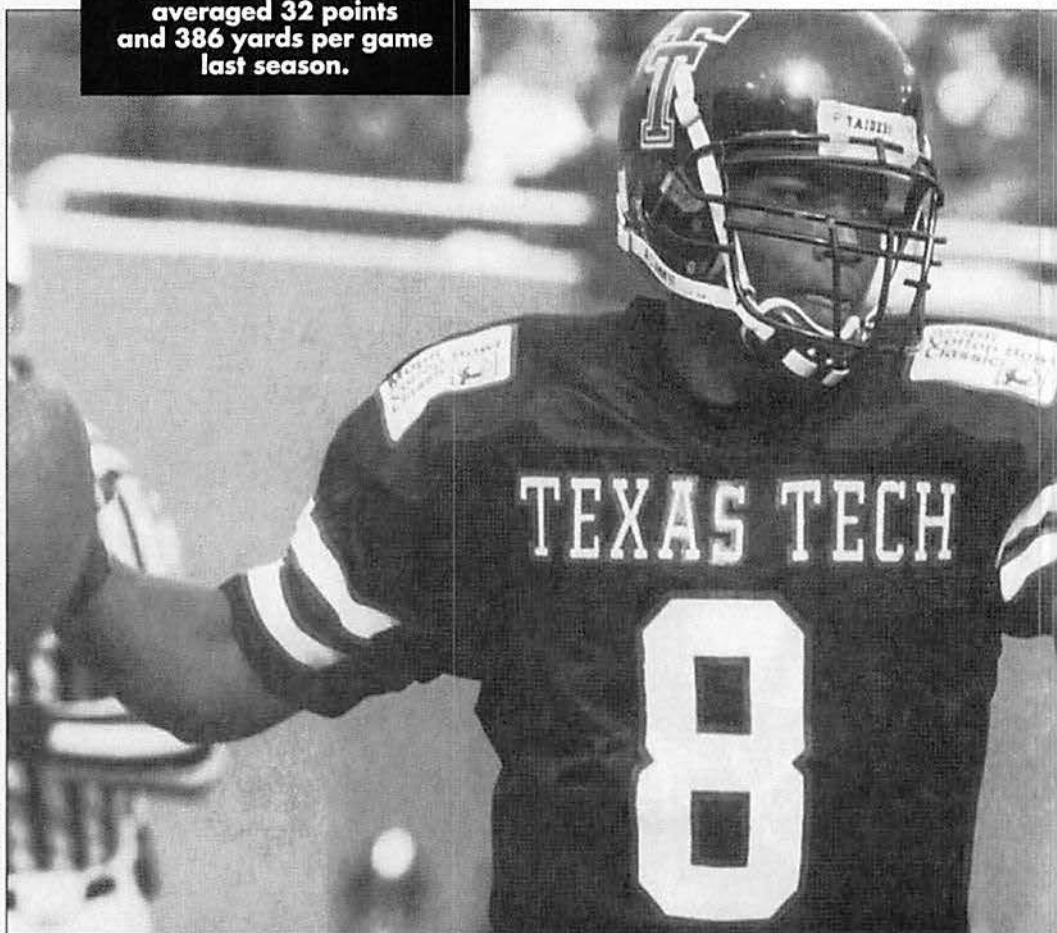
In '96, Texas Tech will be missing some of its key defenders from a year ago, but the Raiders may still possess enough offensive firepower to establish peace in the Middle East. Eight starters return from a unit that averaged 30 points per game last season and exploded for 55 points in the Raiders' Weiser Lock Copper Bowl victory over Air Force.

Led by Hanspard and quarterback Zebbie Lethridge, Texas Tech finished last year among the top 25 teams nation-

ally in both scoring and rushing offense. And showing rather remarkable consistency inside the "red zone," the Raiders scored 37 out of 41 times they crossed their opponents 20-yard-line.

"I feel like we were pretty good offensively last year, but we were also fairly young," said Lethridge, a junior who has started 21 games in his first two seasons. "We've matured an awful lot, and I think the overall strength of

Behind junior quarterback Zebbie Lethridge, the Texas Tech offense averaged 32 points and 386 yards per game last season.



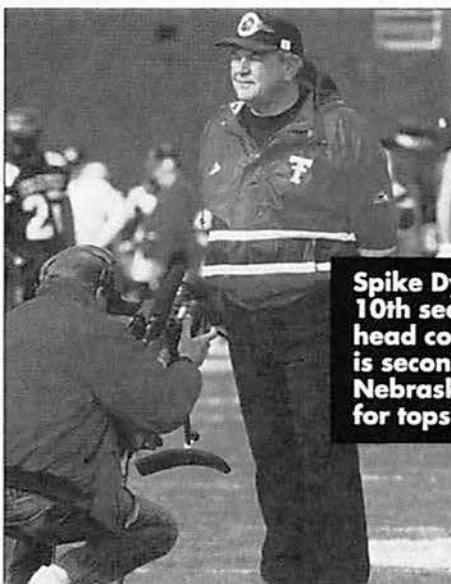
this year's team is our offense. I feel very confident that we will be able to move the ball and score a lot of points this year."

Hanspard is being billed as a Heisman Trophy candidate by the Texas Tech Sports Information Department, but Lethridge may be the real key to the Raiders' success. An elusive runner and an adequate passer, Lethridge has a knack for finding the end zone.

Last year, he accounted for 21 touchdowns (most in the SWC) and passed for 1,885 yards. He also set an SWC record with 211 consecutive pass attempts without an interception and was selected as the Offensive Player of the Game in the Copper Bowl, rolling up 330 yards of total offense.

"Zebbie is one of those guys who can beat a team with his running or his passing," Dykes said. "He also doesn't make the mistakes that will leave you pulling your hair out. He's a steady kid, who is a big

Spike Dykes enters his 10th season as Texas Tech head coach. His longevity is second only to Nebraska's Tom Osborne for tops in the Big 12.



positive for us."

Another big positive for the Raiders' offense is

Hanspard, who led the SWC last year in rushing with 1,374 yards and 18 touchdowns. An elusive runner with plenty of power and exceptional speed, Hanspard is capable of piling up huge numbers in a hurry. In the final three games on the '95 season, for example, Hanspard rushed for 668 yards, including 260 yards in the Copper Bowl.

Separately, Lethridge and Hanspard are extremely dangerous. But together, they could form one of the most lethal quarterback/tailback combinations in the Big 12.

"Byron really makes life easier on me," Lethridge said. "He's a threat every time he touches the ball. And I think we really work well together."

Five of the top six receivers and four of the five starting offensive linemen also return from a year ago, giving the Red Raiders plenty of offensive potential. But the real questions for Texas Tech fall on the defensive side of the ball.

The Raiders return six defensive starters from 1995, but replacing the five departed starters from a year ago may be a more difficult task than balancing the federal budget. In fact, replacing All-American linebacker Zach Thomas seems the equivalent of replacing Jerry Seinfeld on the *Seinfeld* show.

Thomas not a part of the Texas Tech defense? It just doesn't sound right.

"I don't know if you can really completely replace a guy like Zach Thomas, because he meant so much to this team," Dykes said. "I know we won't forget about him. He was the heart of this team."

Unfortunately for Texas Tech, the Raiders didn't just lose the heart of their defense. In losing fellow All-American linebacker Marcus Coleman, along with linebacker Shawn Banks and cornerbacks Shawn Hurd and Verone McKinley, Tech lost several other vital organs, as well.



TECH'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ SWIFT START

Texas Tech opened up 1995 at 4-2. The losses were by a combined three points. Tech needs a similar sprint out of the gate to build momentum for a stretch of games that includes Baylor, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas A&M and Texas.

■ DEPLETED DEFENSE

All-Americans are tough to replace and the Red Raiders will have to replace a pair in linebacker Zach Thomas and rover Marcus Coleman. Linebacker Ryan Donahue will replace Thomas and senior rover Jody Brown will replace Coleman.

■ OPERATING SYSTEM

Texas Tech averaged 32 points per game last year under offensive coordinator Dick Winder. Winder left for Oklahoma. The offense will be run by Rick Dykes, in his sixth year at Tech.

Senior Anthony Armour will move from his starting defensive end spot to linebacker this year in hopes of lessening the burden of replacing three of the Raiders' four starting linebackers from last year. But even with Armour and the return of starting strong side linebacker Robert Johnson, Tech could be in trouble in the middle of its defense.

"Linebacker has to be considered the weakness of this team right now," Dykes said. "Those three guys we lost there were four-year starters, who had at least started at some point during their freshman years. And Banks started over 40 games for us, which is the most in the history of Texas Tech football."

"Basically, we lost the glue of our defense, which were the things that held us together. We'll put some good young kids in the places of those guys, but how fast will they develop? That's a big question for us."

Another big question is who will play cornerback for the Raiders? The only returning letterman is Corey Turner, and he played sparingly last season.

It's quite possible the starting cornerbacks could be true freshmen.

So, the defense would appear to have about as many holes as a golf course,

and the schedule would certainly rival the toughness of Augusta's "Amen Corner." But the Raiders' offense should keep Tech in most of its games, and Lethridge says all the Raiders want is a chance to prove they can play with the big boys of college football.


"We're not going to back down from anyone," Lethridge said. "We've played a tough schedule in the past, and all we want is a chance to prove that we belong (among) the best in the Big 12. We're going into the season with a goal to beat everyone on our schedule."

"I don't know if that's going to happen, but let's just say this: If someone is overlooking Texas Tech, that may be the wrong thing to do." ■

TEXAS TECH TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	82	Sonnie Hart	6-0	194	So.	LE	34	Montae Reagor	6-1	246	So.
	18	Sheldon Bass	5-10	173	So.		89	Taurus Rucker	6-0	248	Fr.
RT	66	Chris Whitney	6-3	296	Jr.	DT	93	Corey Chandler	6-5	259	Jr.
	67	Lynn Scherler	6-4	291	Sr.		76	Jerome Lang	6-3	271	Sr.
RG	68	Shane Dunn	6-3	283	Sr.	NT	74	Cody McGuire	6-5	269	Jr.
	77	Erik Carruth	6-3	278	So.		99	Cody Patton	6-5	277	So.
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	63	Jay Pugh	6-3	283	Jr.		86	Tony Daniels	6-5	261	Jr.
LG	65	Casey Jones	6-5	279	Sr.	SLB	7	Robert Johnson	5-11	188	Sr.
	60	Jayson Hansen	6-4	300	Jr.		29	Ty Ardoin	6-0	187	So.
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	95	P.J. Jasin	6-2	241	Sr.		47	Adrian Roland	6-0	222	Sr.
FL	87	Field Scovell	5-11	184	Sr.	CB	21	Corey Turner	5-8	163	So.
	6	Stacy Mitchell	5-5	150	Jr.		1	Duane Price	5-11	166	Jr.
QB	8	Zebbie Lethridge	6-0	190	Jr.	CB	28	Oscar Solis	5-7	161	Fr.
	15	Sone Cavazos	6-1	212	Sr.		11	Tony Darden	6-0	186	Jr.
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	22	Adrian Ervin	5-11	194	Sr.		23	Reagan Bownds	5-9	179	So.
FB	43	Ryan Jones	6-2	226	Sr.	R	30	Jody Brown	6-0	200	Sr.
	42	Sammy Morris	6-0	203	Fr.		36	Robby Cartwright	6-1	192	So.
PK	98	Tony Rogers	5-11	184	Jr.	P	14	Jeremy Hernandez	5-11	185	So.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96



Moore would like to put last season, which was filled by abuse from defenses and fans, behind him.

OKLAHOMA

BY DAN O'KANE

John Blake kept up with the Sooners while serving as an assistant with the Dallas Cowboys. Since being hired as Oklahoma's head coach on New Year's Eve, he has watched countless hours of video trying to learn about his new team.

Still, Blake said he really won't know much about his team until fall practice begins.

"My objective for this spring was to build an atmosphere around here of working hard," the 34-year-old coach said. "That's how we're going to evaluate these guys. We want guys who are willing to work. Until then, I'm going to keep an open mind."

Oklahoma's disappointing 5-5-1 record last year is in the past as far as Blake is concerned.

One player who is most likely to reap the benefits of the coaching change and the attitude of the new staff is tailback James Allen.

The quarterback job, which was not settled during a

heated battle this spring between incumbent sophomore Eric Moore and redshirt freshman Justin Fuente, generated much of the attention along with the rebuilding of the offensive line and defensive secondary.

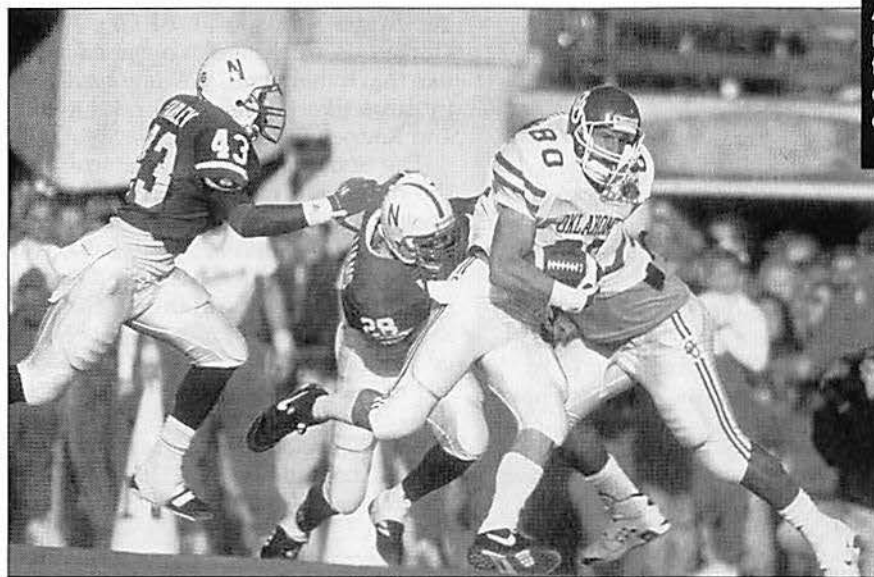
Allen, however, could be the bright spot out of the spring.

Allen has not had the kind of career which was forecast when he signed a letter of intent with OU out of Wynnewood High School.

Allen's production has regressed each season since running for 739 yards as a freshman. He ran for 543 as a sophomore. That figure dropped to 338 as a junior.

Much bigger things were expected of him after earning *USA Today* and *Parade* All-American status at Wynnewood when he rushed for 2,308 yards and 35 touchdowns as a senior.

As Allen's output slipped, fullback Jerald Moore picked up the pieces. It became all "Thunder" and very little "Lightning" in OU's offensive attack. Moore became



A plethora of new faces at receiver and split end, leaves tight end Stephen Alexander as the Sooners' best pass catching threat.

little experience.

Gone are Jajuan Penny and P.J. Mills. Sophomore Chris Blocker, who caught two passes last year, and sophomore Gerald Williams, who caught one pass, go into the spring as the starters. Junior college transfer Mo Little from Coffeyville Community College is expected to step in and help.

The good news is that the Sooners seem to have found a big-play threat at receiver in junior college transfer

Harry Lentz, Jr.



the first OU back since Mike Gaddis in 1991 to rush for over 1,000 yards last year.

Moore, however, bolted. He opted to turn professional after his junior season.

It could be Allen's time to shine, Blake said.

"James is a much better back running out of the I-formation," said Blake, who recruited Allen as an assistant on Gary Gibbs' staff. "James is a guy who likes to find a seam and slash through a hole. In the I-formation, he'll have a chance to see what's in front of him. He doesn't have great speed, but he's good at finding holes. He's a little like Emmitt (Smith), in that he runs low to the ground and has great vision. James will have a chance to fit into that style. Sometimes the scheme helps to get the most out of a player."

Besides Allen, redshirt freshman Demond Parker gives the Sooners quality depth. The fullbacks in the Sooners' two-back should be Dwayne Chandler, Michael Rose and Jermaine Fazande.

Regardless of what Allen and the other backs do, the key to OU's ground game will be rebuilding the offensive line. Gone are seniors Harry Stamps, Milton Overton, Chuck Langston, Joe Carollo and J.R. Conrad.

Blake and his staff will have to redo the line from the ground up.

Tackles Barry Giles and Jay Smith; guards Jon Mulac and Chris Campbell, and center Bruce McClure played sparingly last year.

"No question, the biggest concern we have is the offensive line," Blake said. "We have other shortcomings, but the thing about the offensive line is that it takes time to gel. They need to play together. It's going to take awhile for them to get there."

The receiving corps is another area where the Sooners have

Seth Smith. In two preseason games, Smith caught three passes for 114 yards.

The bright spot is the Sooners are blessed with talent at tight end with junior Stephen Alexander, a likely preseason All-Big 12 player. He caught 43 passes for 580 yards last year. Sophomore Jason Freeman saw limited action last year, but displayed potential when he did get into the game.

The hope early on was the Sooners might have a No. 1 quarterback picked

out going into fall drills, but that didn't happen. Moore, who had a miserable freshman season last year, played well enough in the spring to not lose the job. But he didn't do anything to discourage Fuente.

Harry Lentz, Jr.

Finally the featured back, it is time for James Allen to show why he was one of the country's best coming out of high school.



While the Sooners look for offensive consistency, linebacker Peters and the defense will have to keep OU in games.

If the Sooners plan on throwing the ball considerably more, Fuente appears to have the lead. Moore, the quicker of the two, would shine more in an option attack.

"They're both still learning," Blake said. "These guys have a lot of little things to get better at. They're improving."

"Justin is getting better at getting to the right posture and moving his feet. Eric is getting better throwing and reading the coverages."

After struggling offensively last year — OU finished fifth in the Big Eight in total offense — the Sooners could use a little productivity out of its patchwork unit.

"It's always up to the defense to keep you in games," Blake said. "But until we get the offense going with a new line, receivers and possibly a new quarterback, there is going to be even more pressure on the defense. The thing we have to avoid offensively is busted plays and turnovers and things that put pressure on your defense."

The Sooners will do essentially the same things on defense this year that they did under former coach Howard Schnellenberger. That means using a 4-3 defense.

The biggest question mark defensively is in the secondary where free safety Maylon Wesley and cornerbacks Darrius Johnson and Larry Bush are gone.

Rod Henderson and Anthony Fogle have started at times in the secondary while Terry White and Wendell Davis have seen occasional duty. Northeastern A&M Junior College transfer Ramon Burroughs should also help. Gana Joseph was seeing considerable action during two-a-days last year before the NCAA declared him ineligible. Redshirt freshman Rusty Rushing, Clovis Woods, Dennis Hubbard and Anthony Davis will also get a chance to help.

"We need someone to step in," Blake said. "People for-



OU'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

■ WHO WILL LEAD?

Fuente is the passer and Moore is the option star. Neither owns the starting job. The two-platoon quarterback system doesn't usually work (i.e. last year when Moore and Garrick McGee traded series), so OU will have to settle on one and stay with him.

■ WHERE'S THE BEEF

The offensive line will feature a wave of inexperienced, if not completely new, faces. Only two players have any experience. Establishing an offensive threat will be a problem with big holes up front.

■ NOT SO SPECIAL

Special teams provided more laughs than "Must See TV" Thursday night. Last spring, it was barely mentioned, and the lack of effort showed when punts were blocked in six-straight games.

get Andre Johnson and Ricky Dixon started as freshmen. You need guys like that to help you. We may have that in guys like (signees) Derek Dorsey and Rodney Rideau."

The Sooners return five starters on the defensive front seven, including linebackers Tyrell Peters and Broderick Simpson; defensive tackles Barron Tanner and Martin Chase, and defensive end Roderick Manuel. Gone is sack leader Cedric Jones, who is headed to the NFL.

"I'm encouraged about the defensive line, except losing Cedric," Blake said. "Our linebackers have great size and speed. The thing is — just like throughout the team — lack of depth is a major concern."

One area that Blake plans to emphasize is special teams.

OU's streak of six blocked punts in six games was comical. It put the Sooners in a hole. Between blocked kicks and turnovers, opponents scored half of their points following Sooner miscues.

"We're going to work hard on special teams," Blake said. "You can't let those things happen to you."

The one thing that Blake has going for him is that expectations don't figure to be as high as they were for Schnellenberger last year or the previous six years under Gibbs. The start of the Big 12 and a more demanding schedule figure to keep expectations in check.

Blake also is doing his part to make people realize that it is going to take time to get the program on its feet.

"I'm not being careful," Blake said. "I'm being honest. I'm excited about the direction we're going. In the future, once we do get rolling, I'm going to talk a whole lot about what we're going to do. It just isn't time yet."

"Right now I'm interested in the kids playing hard for 60 minutes, in graduating kids and kids going to class. If we do those things, the wins and losses will take care of themselves." ■

OKLAHOMA TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE	24	Chris Blocker	6-1	209	So.	LE	91	Mike Phipps	6-2	263	Jr.
	81	Jarrell Jackson	5-8	176	Fr.		94	Greg Moyer	6-2	250	So.
LT	70	Barry Giles	6-5	291	Jr.	LT	76	Baron Tanner	6-3	303	Sr.
	62	Ricky Clark	6-2	288	Fr.		95	Scott Wilson	6-1	261	Jr.
LG	66	Chris Campbell	6-3	302	Sr.	RT	97	Kelly Gregg	6-0	267	So.
	55	Able Simmons	6-0	279	Jr.		93	Martin Chase	6-2	282	Jr.
C	73	Bruce McClure	6-5	269	Jr.	RE	85	Rod Manuel	6-5	265	Sr.
	77	Tim Macias	6-2	259	So.		99	Carlos Baker	6-3	262	So.
RG	64	Jon Mulac	6-3	272	Jr.	OLB	36	Travian Smith	6-4	225	Jr.
	67	Derrick Nelson	6-2	280	Jr.		27	Collin Rosenberg	6-2	230	Sr.
RT	66	Jay Smith	6-3	280	So.	MLB	45	Tyrell Peters	6-0	223	Sr.
	50	David Bullard	6-4	301	Sr.		49	Terrance Malone	6-2	220	So.
TE	80	Stephen Alexander	6-4	232	Jr.	OLB	51	Broderick Simpson	6-1	213	Sr.
	86	Jason Freeman	6-3	232	So.		84	Dale Allen	6-2	208	So.
FL	10	Gerald Williams	6-3	186	So.	LCB	21	Ramon Burroughs	6-1	165	Jr.
	5	Seth Smith	5-11	176	So.		4	Clovis Woods	5-9	173	Fr.
QB	1	Eric Moore	6-0	176	So.	SS	13	Terry White	5-10	186	So.
	12	Justin Fuente	6-2	225	Fr.		17	Rod Henderson	6-1	193	Sr.
FB	20	Michael Rose	5-10	228	Jr.	FS	9	Anthony Fogle	5-11	196	Sr.
	30	Jermaine Fozzard	6-0	244	So.		14	Cornelius Davis	6-0	195	Jr.
HB	25	James Allen	5-10	209	Sr.	RC	7	Cedric Stephens	5-9	173	So.
	33	Demond Parker	5-10	170	Fr.		14	Cornelius Davis	6-0	195	Jr.
PK	15	Jeremy Alexander	5-10	186	Jr.	P	82	Brian Lewis	6-2	220	So.

Players with starting experience in bold • Two-deep as of 5-1-96

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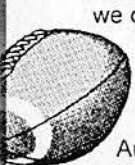
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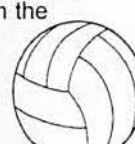
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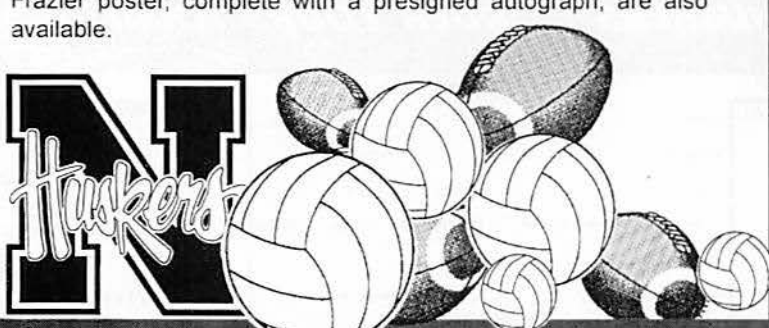
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Nebbraska will have solid starters at defensive tackle this season. And the Cornhuskers will have quality depth up front... maybe. That all depends on several factors over which Charlie McBride, Nebraska's veteran defensive coordinator and coach of the defensive line, has little or no control.

But more in a minute about depth at tackle. First, consider the starters, junior **Jason Peter** and senior **Jeff Ogard** — or, to quote Coach Tom Osborne, “big, old Jeff Ogard.” With those two, flanked by outside lineback-

Defensive Tackle

ers Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom and backed up by linebackers Terrell Farley, Jamel Williams and Jon Hesse or Jay Foreman, “we may be hard to move on,” Osborne said.

Peter and Ogard will make up a formidable front. Peter is ready to step from the considerable shadow of his older brother Christian and become a leader. Ogard appears poised to replace Christian as a starter, after playing last season as his backup. If he perfects his techniques, the 6-foot-6, 310-pound Ogard has the physical ability to be as dominating as Christian Peter, according to McBride.

Jason deferred to his big brother, a consensus first-team All-Big Eight selection who received All-America honorable mention from *The Football News* and UPI, last season.

“I knew I was in Christian’s shadow, but it didn’t bother me, at all,” Jason said. “He worked unbelievably hard to get ready, and whatever attention he got, he certainly deserved it. I was in no rush, and I definitely wasn’t jealous.”

Michael Chow

Jason, who’s 6-foot-4 and 275 pounds, started every game and played well enough to earn All-Big Eight honorable mention from the conference coaches. He made 30 tackles, including five for losses totaling 13 yards. He caused one fumble, broke up a pass and hurried quarterbacks seven times. One of his hurries resulted in an interception. More importantly, however, he helped keep blockers off the linebackers.

The influence of Nebraska’s defensive tackles is more properly measured by team rather than individual statistics. The Cornhuskers ranked second in the nation in rushing defense, fourth in

Jason Peter (95) is ready to step out from the considerable shadow of his older brother, Christian, and become a defensive leader.

scoring defense and 13th in total defense last season. Jason Peter made a significant contribution to that success.

McBride is looking for Peter to become a more “vocal leader” this season.

Peter, who didn’t participate in the winter conditioning program because of a torn ligament in his ankle (which occurred last season), began accepting that role in the spring, providing encouragement on and off the field. Peter said he is confident that Ogard will be up to the task of starting, and that there will be no dropoff in the play of the defense. That’s how the system works at Nebraska.

“I think it’s like when Trev Alberts graduated and Donta Jones got his chance,” Peter said. “Then, Jones leaves and Jared Tomich got his chance to shine. I think it will work out that way with Ogard.”

“He sure is big enough. Guys can’t block him because he’s too big.”

As a result, Ogard will play nose tackle, where he’s more likely to be double-teamed. He doesn’t lack mobility, though, as evidenced by a 19-yard interception return at Oklahoma State last season.

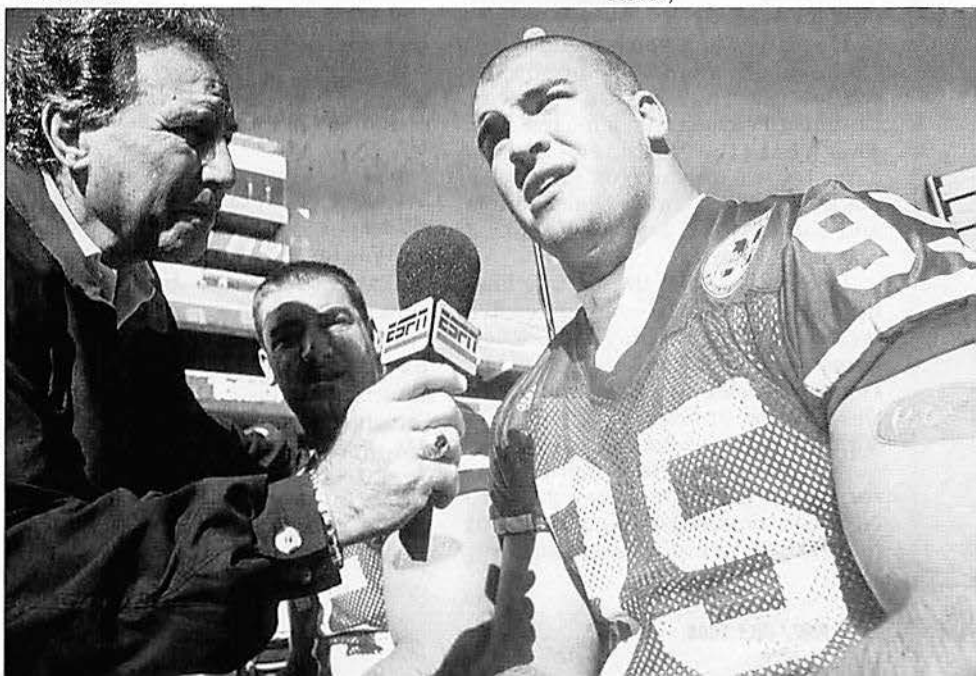
Sophomore **Jason Wiltz**, Ogard’s backup, also has shown some moves as a ball carrier despite his size: 6-foot-3, 295 pounds. During a major scrimmage last spring, Wiltz picked up a fumble and returned it 32 yards for a touchdown. He rambled rather than sprinted, but he got the job done.

Wiltz, the fourth Cornhusker to graduate from St. Augustine

If he perfects his technique, 6-foot-6, 310-pound Jeff Ogard could be a dominating nose tackle.



Bob Berry



High School in New Orleans in recent seasons (the others were Tyrone Hughes, David White and Vincent Hawkins), will have to step up if the Cornhuskers are to have the necessary depth to make a run at a third straight national championship.

"He's got to work hard in the weight room," said McBride, who compared Wiltz to sophomore outside linebacker Mike Rucker. Both have potential physically. They just need to get stronger.

Wiltz, who also needs to become more mentally focused according to McBride, was the third-team tackle last spring because seniors Scott Saltsman and Larry Townsend were both sidelined with knee problems, creating the uncertainty regarding depth at the position referred to earlier.

Saltsman, who has been beset by injuries throughout his Cornhusker career, underwent surgery to remove a cyst from behind his knee during the first week of spring practice and couldn't return. At 6-foot-2 and 260 pounds, he's undersized. But he more than makes up for that with determination.

Saltsman keeps coming back, despite undergoing a half-dozen operations. Last season, for example, he returned to practice just six days after his right knee was scoped. He missed only one game.

Saltsman, who has made the Phillips 66 Academic Honor Roll twice, "is like a bullpen guy. If he can give you 15 or 20 plays a game, he'll give you a real shot in the arm," Osborne said.

The 6-foot-4, 300-pound Townsend has been much less resilient during his career at Nebraska. He played in only five games last season because of a severe knee strain,

and he couldn't practice at all during the spring. He might not be healthy enough to play in the fall.

Townsend was chosen as the West Coast Defensive Player of the Year as a senior at Yerba Buena High School in San Jose, Calif. But he has played in 17 games at Nebraska. He "is a guy who you look at and say, 'Gee, there's a guy with great ability who hasn't been able to do a lot.' If he ever gets himself healed up, motivated and ready to go, he could be as good as we've ever had," Osborne said.

Every season, Osborne said, it seems that one or two seniors who have done very little to that point finally emerge to make significant contributions. Townsend could be such a player.

If not, McBride will have to play with only four tackles or turn to a group of young players, among them red-shirted scholarship freshmen **Derek Allen** and **Brandon Drum**, who found themselves lining up against experienced offensive linemen in the spring.

The young defensive tackles were physically over-matched, according to McBride. But that was good, he added, because now they "understand what they have to do in the off-season."

Five of the remaining seven defensive tackles listed on the spring-practice roster came to Nebraska as walk-ons. Three of the five were freshmen who redshirted last season. The two exceptions were freshman **Luis Almanzar**, who was moved to tackle from tight end, and sophomore **Erik Nelson**.

For the time being, at least, what you see at defensive tackle is what you get. And what you see are Peter, Ogard, Saltsman, Wiltz and Townsend... maybe. ■

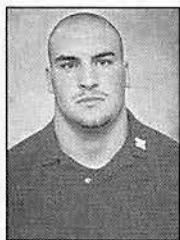
DEFENSIVE TACKLE

JASON PETER

Defensive Tackle

95

6-4, 285
Junior
Locust, N.J.
(Milford Academy)



He earned honorable mention all-conference honors as a sophomore while playing beside brother Christian Peter on the defensive line. This year, the younger Peter is expected to step up his game. He made 30 tackles, caused one fumble and batted down a pass in his first season as a starter.

Peter moved into the starting lineup last fall as a first-team defensive tackle. In 1994, he played in seven games and recorded eight tackles. Had one tackle for a 3-yard loss in the season opener against West Virginia in the Kickoff Classic.

A high school All-America performer as a senior, Peter came to Nebraska on scholarship and sat out his first year in order to redshirt.

RETURNING

DT Jeff Ogard, Sr.
Scott Saltsman, Sr.

DT Jason Peter, Jr.
Jason Wiltz, So.

LOST

Christian Peter

Jason Jenkins

SCOTT SALTSMAN

Defensive Tackle

74

6-2, 270
Senior
Wichita Falls, Texas
(Rider)



Was Jason Peter's backup last fall, and will keep those duties this season. Played in 11 games, missing the contest against Kansas State after having knee surgery. But he returned six days later and finished out the season. He made 13 tackles. He made a career-high seven stops against Arizona State.

A two-time member of the Phillips 66 Big Eight Academic Honor Roll, Saltsman played in eight games in 1994 as a reserve.

JEFF OGARD

Defensive Tackle

97

6-6, 300
Senior
St. Paul, Neb.



Moves into the starting role vacated by Christian Peter. He played in every game last season, making seven tackles and one interception.

JASON WILTZ

Defensive Tackle

99

6-3, 295
Sophomore
New Orleans, La.
(St. Augustine)



Was third-team behind Jason Peter last year but moved up the depth chart and is expected to serve in a backup role this fall. Played in just three games as a freshman, so he's lacking experience. ■

BEHIND EVERY *Champion...*

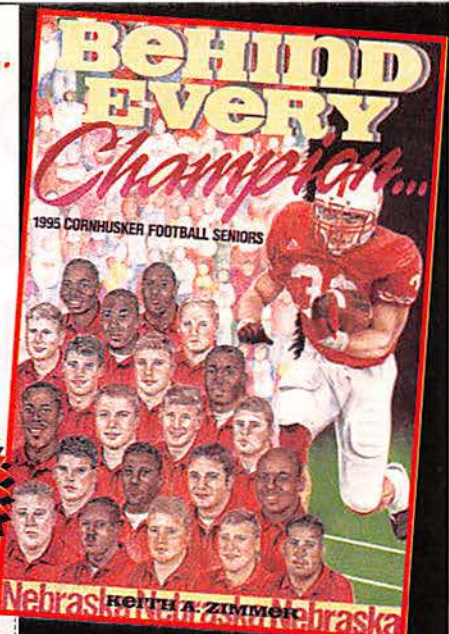
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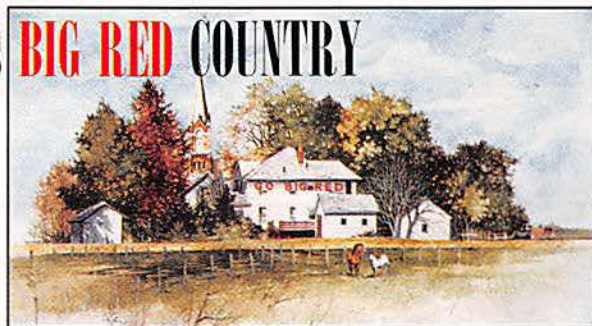
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Bob Berry

After four years of preparing and playing as a back-up, Jon Hesse is ready to step in and assume the responsibilities of a starting middle linebacker in Nebraska's defense.

Ready? Make that eager. "It's kind of my chance to make something happen," said Hesse, a senior from Lincoln, Neb. "When you get the chance, you've got to make the most of it."

Hesse made the most of an opportunity created by the departure of Phil Ellis and Doug Colman, who shared the starting job on the Cornhuskers' back-to-back national championship teams.

He completed a solid spring by making 12 tackles in the Red-White intrasquad game. "When you play with the first-team defense, it's easier on you (at middle linebacker). I might make a lot of tackles, but those guys up front are really making the plays," he said. "I'm just cleaning up."

Hesse was being overly modest. He withstood the challenge of sophomore Jay Foreman and finished the spring atop the depth chart.

Foreman, who started every game at strongside linebacker as a redshirted freshman last season, was moved to the middle to help shore up the position.

Foreman and Hesse will give Nebraska a tandem comparable to Ellis-Colman. "Hesse is the better linebacker against the run and Foreman is better against the pass," said coach Tom Osborne.

"When we have our first-unit defense on the field, we have the feeling and confidence that nobody in the nation can move the ball against us."

Grant Wistrom
Right Rush End

No team found an effective way of dealing with Nebraska's double-barreled attack of rush ends Grant Wistrom and Jared Tomich last year.

"And when we play the 'bubble' defense, Hesse is the best."

In the "bubble" defense, which the Cornhuskers used in an attempt to contain Iowa State tailback Troy Davis last season, the middle linebacker moves up to the line of scrimmage, between the tackles. "Some things you just have to have a knack for, and he (Hesse) does in the 'bubble,'" Osborne said.

One thing Hesse provides a "bubble" alignment is size. He's 6-foot-4 and 250 pounds.

Hesse also provides experience. Even though he has yet to

Linebacker & Rush End

start at Nebraska, he has played a lot, as a backup and on special teams. He began last season backing up on the outside as well as in the middle. But after Ellis suffered a fractured right foot, he stayed in the middle, alternating with Colman.

Hesse finished the season with 37 tackles, 20 of them unassisted and six for losses of seven yards. He also forced a fumble and had a quarterback sack against Colorado.

Hesse will be flanked by weakside linebacker **Terrell Farley** and strongside linebacker **Jamel Williams**, whose talent is such that the coaches were comfortable moving Foreman to the middle.

Although Williams, who began his junior year as a weakside backup, never started, he played as much or more than Foreman late in the season because of his speed and ability to cover receivers as well as defend against the run. Williams ran a 4.51 in the 40-yard dash in pre-spring testing.

Farley will be a candidate for post-season honors after earning a place on the Associated Press All-America second team as a junior transfer from Independence (Kan.), Community College.

Even though he didn't become a starter until the seventh game of the season, Farley led the Cornhuskers in tackles with 62, including 27 solos. He earned first-team All-Big Eight recognition, the conference Defensive Newcomer of the Year award and a reputation for making big plays. "Somehow he gets in the right place at the right time, and covers a lot of field in doing it," Osborne said.

Farley blocked two punts and intercepted three passes, two of which he returned for touchdowns. He had nine tackles for losses totaling 45 yards and five sacks. And he broke up five passes.

Were it not for Farley's presence, senior **Ryan Terwilliger** would be the No. 1 weakside linebacker. Terwilliger, who started the first six games last season, also is an exceptional athlete. He broke the performance index record for the position during post-winter conditioning testing.

The Cornhuskers are similarly blessed at outside linebacker, or rush end, with the return of senior **Jared Tomich**, a first-team All-American, and junior **Grant Wistrom**, a third-team All-American.

"If you can't block those two people, you've got problems," Osborne said.

More often than not, opposing teams couldn't

A "bubble burster," Jon Hesse can clog up the middle with his 6-foot-4, 250 pound frame.

block them last season. Tomich had a team-high 12 tackles for losses, totaling 79 yards, and 10 quarterback sacks, for 75 yards in losses. He forced two fumbles, recovered three fumbles and was credited with 24 quarterback hurries.

"He's a strong guy with speed," said McBride, who compares Tomich to the Pittsburgh Steelers' Kevin Greene. "He's just not as flaky." (Tomich began his career at Nebraska as a down lineman.)

Wistrom, who made 44 tackles, including 15 for losses totaling 55 yards, last season contributed four quarterback sacks and 13 quarterback hurries.

Nebraska's linebackers, inside and out, will rank with the best in the nation this season. They could be the best as a group, in fact. But their focus is a third national championship, not individual honors, according to Wistrom. "We're going to come into the fall ready to play some ball," he said.

"At a lot of positions, the same guys are still here . . . everybody has everybody else's respect. When we have our first-unit defense on the field, we have the feeling and confidence that nobody in the nation can move the ball against us. I think it's (the confidence) up a level from last season."

The Cornhuskers have enough depth that "if one person goes down, we have so many people who play second-team here who could start . . . we're even three-deep at some positions," said Farley. ■

Bob Berry



LINEBACKER/RUSH

JON HESSE

Middle Linebacker

44

6-4, 250

Senior

Lincoln, Neb.

(Southeast)



Hesse enters fall camp as the No. 1 MIKE linebacker, beating out Jay Foreman during spring drills. Last season, he played in every game and made 37 total tackles and one sack.

Moved from outside linebacker to the MIKE slot, where he played behind Phil Ellis and Doug Colman last season.

Graduated last December (in 3 1/2 years) with a degree in psychology.

JAY FOREMAN

Middle Linebacker

56

6-1, 225

Sophomore

Eden Prairie, Minn.



Moved from strongside linebacker to MIKE during spring practice and will battle Jon Hesse for the starting job in the fall. Foreman started every game at SAM last year and finished with 32 tackles including two for five yards lost and two quarterback hurries.

He made three stops in the Fiesta Bowl against Florida.

TERRELL FARLEY

Weakside Linebacker

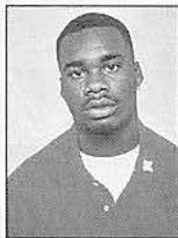
43

6-1, 205

Senior

Columbus, Ga.

(Kendrick/Independence JUCO)



The biggest surprise on the team last year, Farley earned second-team All-America honors by the Associated Press (his first as a Husker). He led the team with 62 tackles (27 solo), returned two interceptions for touchdowns, blocked two punts and had five sacks. Had

RETURNING

LRH Jared Tomich, Sr.
Chad Kelsay, So.
Travis Toline, Fr.

SAM Jamel Williams, Sr.
Tony Ortiz, Fr.
Larry Arnold, Sr.

MIKE Jay Foreman, So. Phil Ellis
-or- Jon Hesse, Sr. Doug Colman

WILL Terrell Farley, Sr. Aaron Penland
Ryan Terwilliger, Sr.

RRH Grant Wistrom, Jr.
Mike Rucker, So.

LOST

Luther Hardin

eight tackles (including two sacks for nine yards lost) in Fiesta Bowl victory to lead the Black Shirts

Transferred from Independence (Kan.) Junior College.

RYAN TERWILLIGER

Weakside Linebacker

91

6-5, 225

Senior

Grant, Neb.



Terwilliger started the first six games at WILL linebacker before making way for Terrell Farley. Still, he made 35 tackles, ninth best on the team, and recorded four quarterback hurries.

Good in the classroom as well, Terwilliger is a two-time member of the GTE academic all-District VII football team.

JAMEL WILLIAMS

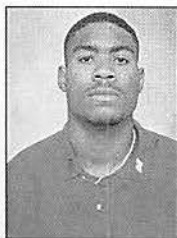
Strongside Linebacker

28

6-2, 205

Senior

Merrillville, Ind.



Recorded 47 tackles in a reserve role while playing behind Jay Foreman at SAM linebacker. With Foreman moving to MIKE, Williams will enter fall practice as the top SAM backer.

An impact player who shows little signs of two knee operations, he recorded 47 tackles while also picking off one pass, breaking up two and recording one sack.

LARRY ARNOLD

Strongside Linebacker

81

6-4, 240

Senior

Copley, Ohio



Played in the first five games last season and then quit the team. He rejoined the team during spring practice. He made six tackles and broke up one pass in a limited role.

Will enter fall camp as the No. 2 SAM linebacker behind Jamel Williams.

JARED TOMICH

Left Rush End

93

6-2, 260

Senior

St. John, Ind.

(Lake Central)



Tomich kept the tradition of talented outside linebackers alive last year when he earned first-team All-America honors (Associated Press) last season. Will start as the left rush as a junior.

He led the team with 10 sacks last season, caused three fumbles and recovered two more. He had 27 tackles and three pass breakups. Tomich was a first-year starter in 1995 after alternating with Dwayne Harris in 1994.

Tomich and Grant Wistrom could be the best pair of rush ends Nebraska has ever had.

CHAD KELSAY

Left Rush End

57

6-3, 230

Sophomore

Auburn, Neb.



Will back up Tomich on the left side. Last year, he was one of three true freshmen to contribute. He played in all 12 games and recorded 20 tackles, broke up three passes and had two sacks.

GRANT WISTROM*Right Rush End***98**

6-5, 250

Junior

Webb City, Mo.

Wistrom was a third-team All-American (AP) and first-team All-Big Eight selection a year ago. He started at the right rush end slot and finished sixth on the team in tackles with 44 (21 solo). He led the team in tackles for loss with 15 — pushing opponents back 55 yards. Four of those were sacks totaling 23 yards in losses.

His 13 quarterback hurries were second only to Jared Tomich's 24.

As a true freshman in 1994, he played in every game and had 36 tackles and 3.5 sacks.

**MIKE RUCKER***Right Rush End***84**

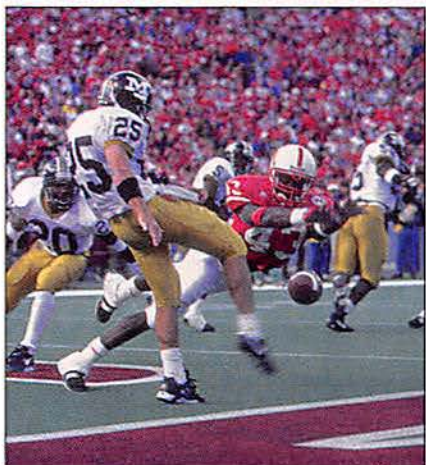
6-6, 250

Sophomore

St. Joseph, Mo.

(Benton)

Saw action in nine games last season as a redshirt freshman, and will enter the fall as the backup behind Grant Wistrom on the right side. Made 13 tackles a year ago, including three solo stops.



Bob Berry

Terrell Farley not only has a knack for getting to quarterbacks, but punters, too.

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Imagine a straight line, drawn across a chalkboard. That would represent what Nebraska defensive backs coach George Darlington considers a "performance line" for evaluating his players.

"You play whoever is above that line," Darlington said. "If there are four guys above the line, you play four. If there are six, you play six... whoever is good enough to help you win 13 games.

"To me, the more the merrier. Ideally, you would have eight guys who are good enough, then you could rotate people. And if you do have an injury, you don't drop off dramatically."

With eight above the performance line, the secondary could be two-deep.

"We've never had eight guys above the line," said Darlington. There has never been a season when, except for emergencies, the No. 7 and 8 defensive backs would have played at crunch time.

Because of injuries and inexperience, the Cornhuskers came out of spring practice with four players clearly above the performance line, according to Darlington. And two of those four are at the same position: rovers (or strong safeties) **Octavious McFarlin** and **Mike Minter**.

Free safety **Eric Stokes** and cornerback **Michael Booker** are the other two. Junior free safety **Eric Warfield** is close to being a fifth above the line, Darlington said.

McFarlin, a junior from Bastrop, Texas, climbed above the performance line last spring. He climbed ahead of Minter, the returning starter and a second-team All-Big Eight selection, in fact.

"At this point, he (McFarlin) probably would start," Darlington said.

Last year, offenses tried to pick on him, but now left corner Michael Booker is sitting pretty after earning Fiesta Bowl Defensive Most Valuable Player honors and having another strong spring.

McFarlin's place on the depth chart is a result of his play in the spring rather than an indication of a poor performance by Minter, who was second on the team in tackles last season with 53, including 27 unassisted. Minter also intercepted two passes and caused one fumble. "No way are we disappointed in Mike," said Darlington. "Injuries and class conflicts kept him from

Defensive Back

doing much in the spring.

Minter was sidelined for the remainder of the 1994 season after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee in the second game against Texas Tech. The knee has continued to give him problems, though it seemed to show marked improvement as last season went along.

In any case, McFarlin earned a promotion with "an excellent spring," Darlington said.

He has gone from "being an excellent special teams player who wouldn't play when the game was on the line" to a player in whom Darlington has confidence. "He's always been a tremendous hitter, like a Ronnie Lott," Darlington said, adding that I-back **Damon Benning** was sidelined for a time last spring because of a hit by the 5-foot-11, 190-pound McFarlin. "Now he has improved in other phases of the game."

Michael Chow



McFarlin's physical ability is such that he played as a true freshman two seasons ago.

The emergence of McFarlin will benefit senior free safety **Eric Stokes**, who has been asked to play every position in the secondary during his career and has never had an opportunity to concentrate on one.

The situation at cornerback is considerably less certain. "We have only one corner we're really confident about right now, and that's Booker," Darlington said.

Booker, a senior from Oceanside, Calif., started the last 10 games a year ago, including the Fiesta Bowl. He made 33 tackles, broke up six passes and tied linebacker Terrell Farley for the team lead in pass interceptions with three. He also intercepted a pass in the Fiesta Bowl and returned it 42 yards for a touchdown, which contributed to his being chosen as the game's Outstanding Defensive Player.

At 6-foot-2 and 205 pounds, Booker stands out among the Cornhuskers' diminutive cornerbacks. Senior **Mike Fullman**, who emerged from the spring as the other No. 1 corner, is listed at 5-foot-7 and 170 pounds. Redshirted freshman **Jerome Peterson**, who finished second to Fullman on the right side, is listed at 5-foot-7 and 185. And junior **Leslie Dennis**, Booker's backup, is 5-foot-8 and 185.

Fullman's development was impeded by a groin pull that sidelined him much of the spring. He played as a backup last season, intercepting two passes, one of which he returned 86 yards for a touchdown. He transferred to Nebraska from Rutgers, where he had some experience as a starter.

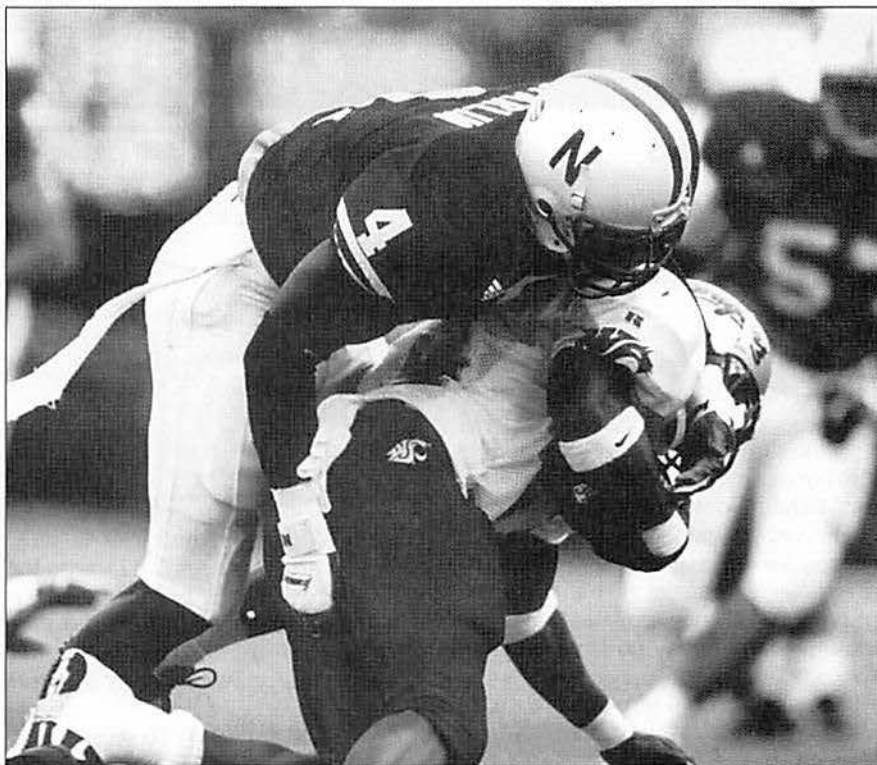
Peterson, who also had injury problems, got to spend some time with the No. 1 defense last spring. He was an outstanding high school running back in Port Allen, La. In a game his junior year, he rushed for 410 yards and scored eight touchdowns on only 17 carries. The Cornhusker coaches considered Peterson the second-best high school running back available (behind Ahman Green) during his recruitment.

Nebraska was interested in him as a defensive back, however. Despite his size, Peterson packs a wallop. He was a powerlifter in high school. And he has the speed necessary to cover receivers man-to-man. He ran the 40-yard dash in 4.57 seconds during the Cornhuskers' post-winter conditioning tests.

Peterson made significant strides in the spring, according to Darlington.

Dennis, who's from Bradenton, Fla., missed the

After years of playing different positions, Eric Stokes will work solely at free safety this year.



Bob Berry

Compared to former NFL All-Pro Ronnie Lott because of his physical play, Octavious McFarlin (4) will battle Mike Minter for starting time in the fall.

entire spring following knee surgery. He was bothered by tendinitis in both knees last season and played in only nine games, after playing in every game the year before as a redshirted freshman. He even started the Kickoff Classic against West Virginia, while Tyrone Williams sat out a one-game suspension. If he were healthy, he'd almost certainly be a starter. Before the knee problems, he was among the fastest Cornhuskers, having run the 40 in 4.43.

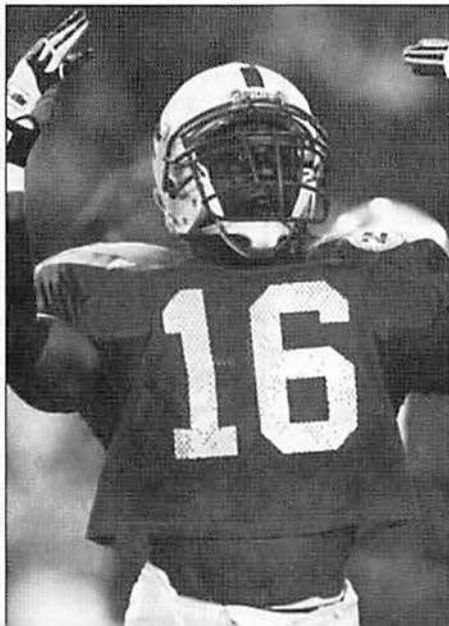
The process of identifying cornerbacks will continue during two-a-day practices in the fall. "We'll have to count on guys who have been injured plus some guys coming in," said Darlington.

Incoming scholarship freshmen **Mike Brown** from Scottsdale, Ariz., and **Ralph Brown, II**, from Walnut, Calif., will have an opportunity step in without redshirting. Darlington also plans to try **Eric Johnson** at cornerback, assuming Johnson is eligible. Johnson, who's from Phoenix, was a letter-of-intent signee in 1995, but he didn't meet NCAA freshman eligibility requirements and had to sit out last year.

Johnson will be a sophomore in eligibility, but he'll be the same as a freshman because he wasn't allowed to practice with the team (in the fall or spring) under NCAA rules.

Nebraska's non-conference schedule includes Michigan State, Arizona State and Colorado State, none of which will be in the Pacific category — Pacific dropped its football program last season.

The performance line has been drawn. By the time Michigan State comes to Memorial Stadium to open the season on Sept. 7, Darlington is hoping another cornerback or two will step across it. ■



Bob Berry

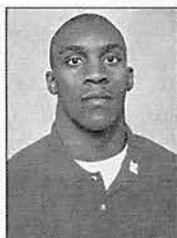
DEFENSIVE BACK

ERIC STOKES

Left Cornerback

16

5-11, 185
Senior
Lincoln, Neb.
(East)



Stokes opened 1995 as the starting left cornerback before making way for Michael Booker. He spent the rest of the year backing up Tony Veland at free safety. He enters the fall as the projected starter at that spot. He played in every game last season, making 18 tackles and breaking up two passes.

Opened the 1994 season at cornerback, but moved to free safety after a knee injury ended the season for Mike Minter. In the spring, Stokes moved back to cornerback and won the starting job on the left side. He adjusted well to his new position making two tackles, intercepting a pass and breaking up another in the spring game. It marked the first spring that Stokes remained healthy throughout.

ERIC WARFIELD

Free Safety

3

6-1, 195
Junior
Texarkana, Ark.
(Arkansas)



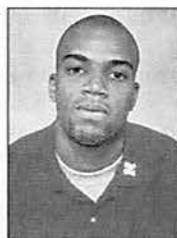
As a sophomore, Warfield made 16 tackles and broke up two passes. Sat out the 1994 season. As a senior in high school, he had seven interceptions and 47 tackles.

MICHAEL BOOKER

Left Cornerback

20

6-2, 205
Senior
Oceanside, Calif.
(El Camino)



Booker was named the Defensive MVP of the Fiesta Bowl for his performance

RETURNING

LCB Michael Booker, Sr.
Chad Blahak, Sr.
Dave Alderman, Sr.

ROV Mike Minter, Sr.
-or- Octavious McFarlin, Jr.
Mike Roberts, Sr.

FS Eric Stokes, Sr.
Eric Warfield, Jr.
Eric Walther, So.

RCB Mike Fullman, Sr.
Leslie Dennis, Jr.
Jerome Peterson, Fr.

LOST

Darren Schmadeke

Tony Veland

Tyrone Williams

against Florida. He had four tackles, returned an interception 42 yards for a touchdown and broke up three passes against the Gators. Booker will be remembered most for his sack of Danny Wuerffel in the end zone.

He started the last 10 games and finished last year with 33 tackles. He also tied for the team lead in interceptions with three for 50 yards.

MIKE FULLMAN

Right Cornerback

12

5-7, 170
Senior
Roselle, N.J.
(Abraham Clark/Rutgers)



The smallest member of the team, Fullman missed most of spring ball with an injury. He is the leading candidate to replace All-Big Eight selection Tyrone Williams at right cornerback.

Fullman recorded 16 tackles, including two interceptions for 97 yards last season. Fullman was also the Huskers' top punt returner a year ago, running back 21 kicks for 285 yards and one touchdown against Kansas State.

LESLIE DENNIS

Right Cornerback

2

5-8, 185
Junior
Bradenton, Fla.
(Southeast)



Dennis played in nine games last year and will enter fall as the backup

to Booker at left cornerback. Dennis made 10 tackles last season and had one interception despite being slowed by tendonitis in both knees.

In 1994, he started one game and backed up Williams most of the season.

OCTAVIOUS McFARLIN

Rover

4

5-11, 190
Junior
Bastrop, Texas



Backed up Mike Minter at rover a year ago, McFarlin ended spring drills sharing first-team duties with the Husker senior. He played in 12 games last season, making 13 solo tackles and 21 total stops. He had seven tackles against Pacific. Played in eight games as a true freshman in 1994.

McFarlin recorded six tackles in last year's spring game to strengthen his hold on the second team.

Made an immediate impact in his first season as a Husker, playing in eight games once Minter was sidelined. McFarlin made 15 tackles and broke up one pass while playing a reserve role behind starter Kareem Moss at rover. He made four tackles in a game twice (Pacific and Kansas) and made three more in a victory over UCLA.

McFarlin and outside linebacker Grant Wistrom were the only true freshmen to play in 1994. Was a multi-sport athlete at Bastrop High School, Texas. Was a safety, punter and returner on the football team. Also a prep track star.

MIKE MINTER

Rover

10

5-10, 190
Senior
Lawton, Okla.



Minter started every game last year despite still recovering from reconstructive knee surgery in 1994. Recorded a team-high 53 tackles and also had two

interceptions. He started the first two games at free safety in 1994 before blowing out his knee against Texas Tech.

Minter will hopefully improve a lot this season. Injuries have slowed him down and haven't enabled him to practice full time, but coaches hope this year will be different for him.

JEROME PETERSON

Right Cornerback

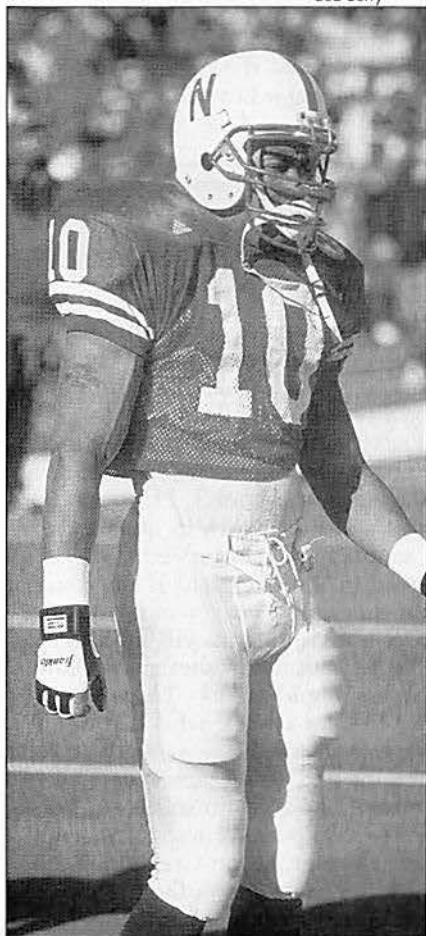
26

5-7, 185
Freshman
Port Allen, La.



Redshirted last season after a stellar career at Port Allen High School in 1994. Entered the spring listed as third team, but moved up to second.

Bob Berry



Injuries have kept rover Mike Minter off the practice field over the last two years.

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THE TO THE BIG RED BIG EASY?

Whether he was Cassius Clay or Muhammad Ali, he was still The Champ. How could you bet against him? You couldn't, at least until he relinquished his heavyweight title to Joe Frazier.

And in college football, whether a new quarterback must replace Tommie Frazier or even if the odds are becoming stacked against another national championship, the Nebraska Cornhuskers are still The Champs. They have been for two years running.

So in 1996, how can you bet against them? You can't.

Nebraska, stocked with a dominating defense, a super sophomore I-back in Ahman Green and a refuse-to-lose attitude, can win an unprecedented third straight national title.

The Big 12 schedule and title game will be new hurdles for the Huskers, while an old obstacle like Florida State could stand in the way of a perfect NU season as well.

Tennessee, with Heisman Trophy candidate Peyton Manning, is this year's newcomer into the national title race, while Florida again could pass its way into the national championship game at the Nokia Sugar Bowl...

...Where the Gators could meet the Huskers. Perhaps in another heavyweight title rout.

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1. NEBRASKA

Last Season: 12-0 • 1996 Opener: Sept. 7 vs. Michigan State

Where else can a school lose 12 starters from a two-time national championship squad and think it's even better? Nebraska has the rare ability to put players in the record book and then replace them, never losing a step. As college football begins to see more parity, this rare quality is the reason Nebraska is the odds on favorite to win an unprecedented third straight title in 1996.

But in an odd twist, it may not be the offense that pushes the Huskers toward the Sugar Bowl, but rather the defense.

Led by rush ends Jared Tomich, an All-American last season, and junior Grant Wistrom, the Huskers appear even faster this year. There was some shuffling in the spring at linebacker, but this could actually be the strength of the Black Shirts led by weakside linebacker Terrell Farley.

The secondary was the hardest hit, losing two starters. But with the amount of blowouts the Huskers recorded last year, including the Fiesta Bowl, many of the backups saw considerable playing time. Mike Fullman and Eric Stokes are both big-time play-makers at right corner and free safety.



AHMAN GREEN
I-Back

Tom Osborne doesn't think this year's offense will put up the numbers Tommie Frazier and company did last season, but it will still be a very powerful club.

Scott Frost, a transfer from Stanford, appears to be the heir apparent to Frazier. A bigger quarterback (6-foot-3, 215 pounds), Frost brings a stronger arm to quarterback while not sacrificing a lot of speed.

And speed in the backfield is one thing Nebraska never has to worry about. Sophomore Ahman Green will attempt to build on his sensational freshman year after earning the starting I-back job. There is plenty of depth behind Green, who rushed for 1,086 yards and 13 touchdowns, with senior Damon Benning and junior James Sims.

The offensive line is again solid and huge (averaging 6-3, 305 pounds across the front).

despite losing three-year starter Aaron Graham at center. Junior Aaron Taylor has moved over the ball allowing Adam Treu (6-6, 300) to move into the lineup.

Nebraska's schedule is favorable for a repeat, although a Sept. 21 road game at Arizona State will provide an early test. ■



2. FLORIDA STATE

Last Season: 10-2 • **1996 Opener:** Sept. 7 vs. Duke

Here's a news flash: Florida State will finish in the top four when the final polls are released.

The Seminoles, after all, have ended the year among the nation's top four for nine years running, a record that is remarkable in the era of scholarship limitations.

Florida State could finish as national champion this fall, benefiting from a favorable schedule that includes home games against Virginia and Florida, the only two teams that defeated FSU in 1995.

The annual clash with Miami has lost some appeal until the Hurricanes can regain their spot

among the nation's elite.

The 'Noles will line up 15 starters from last year's 10-2 team, including Warrick Dunn, who bypassed the enticement of the NFL draft to return for his senior season.

Junior Thad Busby must replace departed Danny Kanell at quarterback, while highly-touted redshirt freshman Dan Kendra could push for some playing time.

The FSU defense will rely on four starters returning in the secondary, while defensive ends Reinard Wilson and Peter Boulware are considered two of the best ever to play at Florida State. ■



DARYL BUSH
Linebacker



3. TENNESSEE

Last Season: 11-1 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 31 vs. UNLV

With a Heisman Trophy candidate at quarterback, the momentum from an 11-1 season in 1995 and 13 starters returning this fall, the Tennessee Volunteers have positioned themselves for a legitimate run at a national championship.

Now, if they can only beat the Florida Gators.

The Volunteers have yet to reach the title game of the SEC because of their inability to knock off the Gators. And thus, any Bowl Alliance bid or shot at a national title game has eluded the Vols.

That could change in 1996 as Peyton Manning enters his junior

year at quarterback. Manning set school records last year for yards (2,954), completions (244), attempts (380) and completion percentage (64.2) and was playing as well as any quarterback in the country at season's end.

And Manning will have plenty of offensive help around him. Senior tailback Jay Graham rushed for 1,438 yards as a junior, while wide receiver Joey Kent caught a school-record 69 passes in '95.

The Vols will have to rebuild an offensive line and continue to develop a defense that can stop a passing attack like Florida's. ■



PEYTON MANNING
Quarterback



4. COLORADO

Last Season: 10-2 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 31 vs. Washington State

There's unfinished business in Boulder. Colorado, while finishing the last two seasons with outstanding records (11-1 and 10-2), sees both years as disappointments since neither resulted in a national title.

Playing second fiddle to Nebraska has kept Colorado from attaining its ultimate goal. This year could be no different.

But second-year coach Rick Neuheisel feels he has the bodies to finally compete with the Huskers.

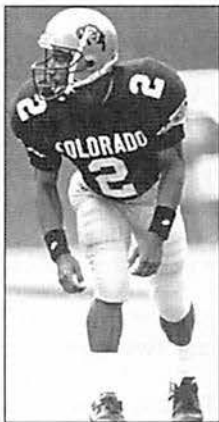
Colorado is loaded, returning 16 starters (nine on offense) and many talented reserves.

How far this team goes will

depend greatly on the health and arm of quarterback Koy Detmer. Detmer missed most of last season after tearing his ACL against Texas A&M. Backup John Hessler filled in admirably and had his moments, but there is no doubt this is Detmer's team.

The high-octane offense, which ranked sixth in the nation last year, returns a plethora of scorers, including receiver James Kidd and Rae Carruth. Not many defenses can cover these guys straight up.

With one year of the 4-3 defense under its belt, look for CU to have one of the nation's best units. ■



JAMES KIDD
Receiver



5. FLORIDA

Last Season: 12-1 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 31 vs. SW Louisiana

Secondaries beware. Last year, Florida's offense burned opponents for nearly 534 yards and 48 points a game. It was one of the most powerful in school and SEC history. Only three starters are gone from that unit.

Receiver Chris Doering and linemen Reggie Green and Jason Odom will be missed, but the return of quarterback Danny Wuerffel eases the pain. Wuerffel, who finished third in the Heisman Trophy balloting as a junior, compiled an NCAA record in passing efficiency with a 178.4 rating last year. He will be looking to add to his 75 career

touchdowns.

Wuerffel will have plenty of targets as the Gators return five of their top six wide receivers, including juniors Ike Hilliard and Reidel Anthony. The Florida ground game returns intact. Last year, the tailback trio of Elijah Williams, Fred Taylor and Terry Jackson combined for more than 1,900 yards and 12 TDs.

Defensively, Steve Spurrier must replace five starters on the front seven and get accustomed to a new 4-3 defensive scheme. The most experience returns in the secondary, highlighted by strong safety Lawrence Wright. ■



LAWRENCE WRIGHT
Safety



6. TEXAS

Last Season: 10-2-1 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 31 vs. Missouri

Texas has the kind of schedule of a national championship contending team and the talent to match. If the Longhorns can survive the tests of Top 20 teams Notre Dame, Virginia, Colorado and Texas A&M as well as a potential Big 12 championship game against Nebraska, Texas could find itself at the top of the polls.

Texas has the offensive firepower to pull off such a feat. The Longhorns return quarterback James Brown, wide receiver Mike Adams, tight end Pat Fitzgerald and running backs Shon Mitchell and Ricky Williams. Only two linemen

return, but one is first team All-American Dan Neil.

Joining this group is running back Priest Holmes and wide receiver Curtis Jackson. Both Holmes and Jackson missed 1995 with injuries. The pair combined for 969 yards in 1994.

The Longhorns also return seven starters on defense, five of which received All-Southwest Conference mention.

The biggest task will be replacing first team All-American Tony Brackens. Four incoming freshmen and two upperclassmen will fight for that spot. ■



PAT FITZGERALD
Tight End



7. USC

Last Season: 9-2-1 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 25 vs. Penn State (Kickoff Classic)

Southern California crashed Northwestern's New Year's party in the Rose Bowl as the Trojans handled the Big Ten's best, 41-32.

Now USC must hope it can survive another Big Ten barrage as the Trojans open a difficult schedule in the Kickoff Classic against Penn State, followed by a road game two weeks later at Illinois.

Should USC go through the first part of the season unscathed, the last two games of the season will dictate how good this team is. The Trojans close with two nemeses — UCLA and Notre Dame.

UCLA has beaten USC the last

five seasons, while Notre Dame owns a 13-game winning streak over its rival from the West Coast.

USC finished 9-2-1 last season, but lost all-world wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson to the New York Jets with the first pick in the NFL draft.

The Trojans still have talent on offense with quarterback Brad Otton and running back Delon Washington, a 1,000-yard rusher from a year ago.

Ottom completed 62 percent of his passes in '95 for 1,923 yards, including a stunning 391 yards in the Rose Bowl. ■



BRAD OTTON
Quarterback



8. TEXAS A&M

Last Season: 9-3 • **1996 Opener:** Aug. 24 at BYU (Pigskin Classic)

When a team loses its four-year starter at quarterback and its No. 1 tailback and fullback, the anticipation of a new season is usually overshadowed with trepidation.

But Texas A&M has replaced quarterback Corey Pullig and tailback Leeland McElroy with players like transfer Brannndon Stewart at quarterback and sophomore running backs Sirr Parker and D'Andre Hardeman.

The offensive line in 1996 should improve as well, giving the Aggies hope that their offense can equal the productivity of their annual onslaught on defense.

Blessed with a rifle arm and excellent speed, Stewart will be the first quarterback with a dangerous run/pass package since the days of Kevin Murray in the mid-1980s, the glory years of the A&M offense.

Defensively, A&M could have its best unit in decades, perhaps ever. Eight starters return from a group that led the nation in total defense until the final regular season game of 1995.

Three senior starters anchor the defensive line, while A&M features the deepest linebacking corps in the country, led by All-America candidate Keith Mitchell. ■



SIRR PARKER
Tailback



9. SYRACUSE

Last Season: 9-3 • **1996 Opener:** Sept. 7 vs. North Carolina

Schedule and tradition makes Syracuse one of the nation's best teams in 1996. Outside of an easy Big East schedule, the Orangemen's biggest test comes in the season opener against North Carolina, a team they handled last season.

If the Orangemen play up to expectations, a nine- or 10-win season and a major bowl berth is not out of the question. Once Syracuse is in a bowl, it is the closest thing to a lock in college football. Syracuse has won its last seven bowl appearances.

Quarterback Donovan McNabb leads an offense that returns seven

starters from last season. McNabb accounted for just over half of the Orange offense last season, passing for 1,991 yards and rushing for 261.

Joining McNabb in the backfield is tailback Malcolm Thomas, the team's leading rusher last season. More will be expected out of Thomas as he heads into this season with little competition at his position.

The Syracuse defense returns five players. The leading tackler from a year ago, free safety Donovin Darius, returns for his junior season and should be up for some post-season awards. ■



DONOVAN MCNABB
Quarterback



10. NOTRE DAME

Last Season: 9-3 • **1996 Opener:** Sept. 5 at Vanderbilt

Notre Dame rebounded from a disappointing 1994 season, in which the Irish went 6-5-1, to a solid 1995 mark of 9-3. Seven players return on each side of the ball this fall.

On the offense, three linemen return, which should give solid protection for the backfield. Quarterback Ron Powlus missed the spring recovering from a broken arm he suffered late in '95 and Tom Krug, who started twice in Powlus' absence, left the team this spring.

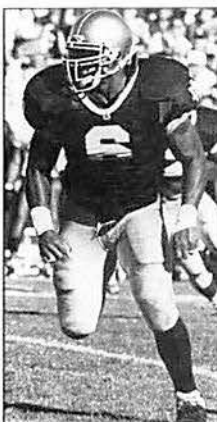
Tailback Randy Kinder and fullback Marc Edwards are also returning starters. Tailback Autry Denison gives the Irish another weapon in

the backfield. This threesome rushed for 2,214 yards last season.

The Fighting Irish defense is loaded. Six of the seven interior players return. The linebacking corps is among the nation's best. Kory Minor and Bert Berry man the outside slots. Kinnon Tatum and Lyron Cobbins provide support on the inside.

The Irish linebackers combined for 305 tackles and 13.5 quarterback sacks last season.

Allen Rossum is the only returning starter in the secondary. Last season, he returned two of his three interceptions for touchdowns. ■



LYRON COBBINS
Linebacker

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How good are Nebraska's offensive lines? Nicknamed the "Pipeline," the 1994 offensive line (below), which sent four to the NFL, was considered the best unit in college football history.

But one season later, four new starters led the Huskers to the second-highest rushing average (399.8) in school history.

Even though he and his Kansas State teammates held Nebraska to season lows of 190 yards rushing and 338 yards total offense, defensive tackle Tim Colston was impressed by the Cornhuskers' offensive linemen a year ago. "They just grow those guys on trees, it seems like," he said.

For most teams, such yardage would be reason for celebration — particularly coming, as it did, against the nation's top-ranked defense in 1995. But the standard is much higher at Nebraska. And much of the credit for that lofty standard goes to the offensive linemen to whom Colston referred.

The Big Eight defensive player of the year for 1995 was right in giving Nebraska's offensive linemen the respect implicit in his remark. He was wrong about them growing on trees, however.

Cornhusker linemen grow in Nebraska's state-of-the-art strength and conditioning complex, under the direction of assistant athletic director and director of athletic performance Boyd Epley and his staff. They are fed under the supervision of Dave Ellis, Nebraska's director of performance nutrition.

And they are driven to succeed by personal commitment, enhanced by Nebraska's winning tradition, which most recently includes back-to-back national championships and three consecutive undefeated regular seasons. "Attitude is a big part of it," offensive line coach Milt Tenopir said.

"It's a filter-down effect from the year before, and the year before that, and the year before that. It's the mindset of the people we have now. They think they can go against anybody.

"They feel like they aren't going to get beat."

Tenopir was explaining how he and Dan Young, who also works with the offensive line, could lose four starters from a 1994 line that Tenopir had described as the best during his tenure at Nebraska and yet be able to assemble a 1995 line that opened the way for the second-highest rushing average in Cornhusker history. Nebraska averaged 399.8 rushing yards per game last season, just short of the school record of 401.7 yards, established by the "Scoring Explosion" team in 1983. The 1994 line included the Outland Trophy winner in tackle Zach Wiegert, two All-Americans in Wiegert and guard Brenden Stai and three players who are now in the National Football League: Wiegert, Stai and Rob Zatechka.

There's Never A Drop

However, most fans now would say the Cornhuskers' 1995 line was better.

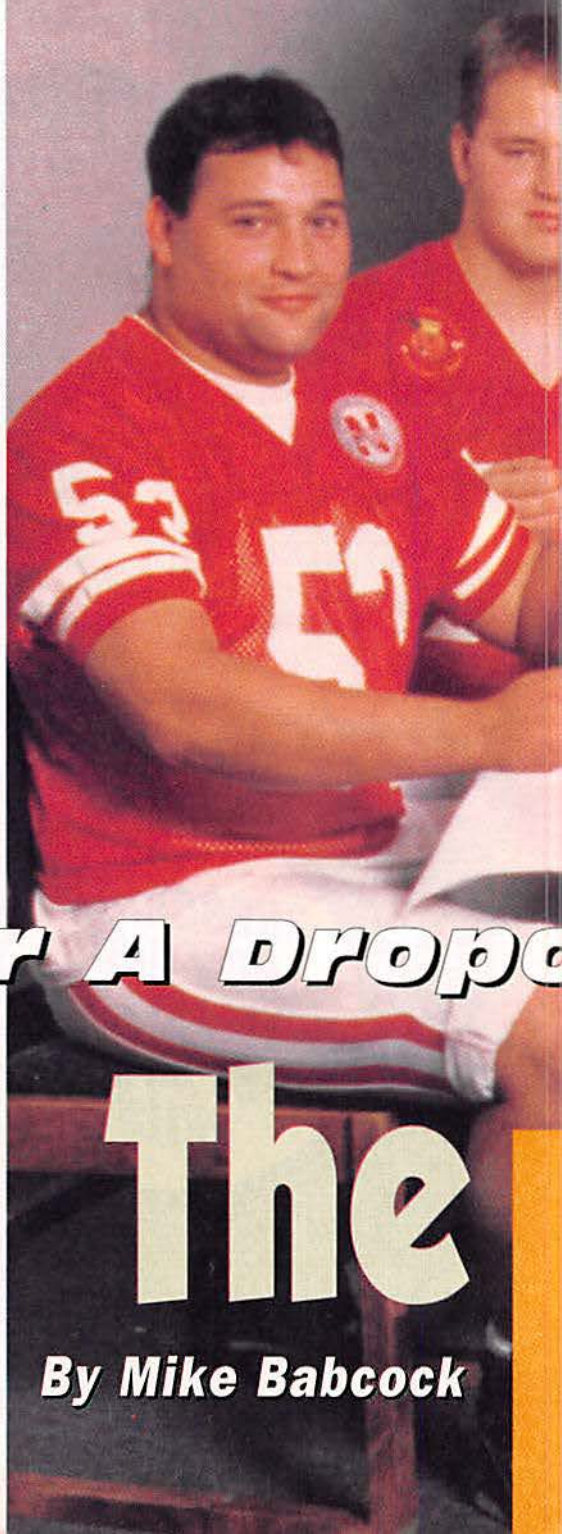
From a coach's more diplomatic perspective, the 1994 and 1995 lines were simply different from one another. The 1994 line was stronger. The 1995 line was "overall, a little bit more mobile," Tenopir said. "They had a little more finesse, and we were able to get the ball outside a little better."

As a result, he emphasized running inside the tackles during spring practice. Despite last season's success, he expects continued improvement. The 1994 group earned the nickname the "Pipeline." Last season's group became the "Pipeline II." Tenopir expects no less than a "Pipeline III."

"They've got the right mental attitude," he said last spring.

"We might as well go for three in a row."

He was referring to a third outstanding offensive line, which, in



The

By Mike Babcock



At . . .

FACTORY

turn, would enhance Nebraska's chances of winning an unprecedented third consecutive national championship.

The line should be better, what with three starters returning and two experienced players ready to step up at the positions left open by the departure of Aaron Graham and Steve Ott. Senior Adam Treu and junior Jon Zatechka will be new in starting roles. But both played in the regular rotation last season. "A lot of teams play only five or six guys, come hell or high water," said Tenopir. "The secret is to make sure your back-ups get plenty of playing time, so that when they have to step forward, they're ready."

If there are secrets to developing outstanding offensive linemen, Tenopir knows them all by now. This will be his 23rd season at Nebraska. He's been on coach Tom Osborne's staff longer than anyone except defensive backs coach George Darlington, whose first season was also Osborne's first.

Tenopir has coached five Outland Trophy and two Lombardi Award winners. Dave Rimington won the Outland Trophy in 1981 and 1982 and the Lombardi Award in 1982. Dean Steinkuhler gave Nebraska three consecutive Outland Trophies and two consecutive Lombardi Awards when he won both in 1983. Will Shields won the Outland Trophy in 1992. And Wiegert won the Outland Trophy in 1994.

All but Shields were from Nebraska. There was a period when the Cornhuskers had difficulty recruiting offensive linemen from out of state, according to Tenopir. For a time, "people (recruiters) used numbers against us," he said. "And we do have a lot of linemen. But half of them are walk-ons, who allow us to get the necessary repetitions (in practice)." Nebraska has been forced to be more selective in allowing players to walk on in recent seasons, making such negative recruiting less effective.

"We've been doing a lot more with out-of-state linemen," Tenopir said.

The back-to-back national championships have enhanced the

Cornhuskers' recruiting pitch, in most cases, though some high school players have backed away because of the level of competition. Nebraska's run-oriented offense also is attractive to recruits, said Tenopir. Or, at least, it should be. "I can't imagine a guy (offensive lineman) picking a passing team over a running team if he likes to mix it up."

Randy Hampton



Offensive line coach Milt Tenopir, who is entering his 23rd season at Nebraska, has developed five Outland Trophy and two Lombardi winners, including Dave Rimington who won the Outland twice (1981, '82) and a Lombardi (1982).



Bob Berry

The Cornhuskers are less concerned than some programs about the height of offensive linemen. Junior Aaron Taylor, who has moved to center after earning third-team All-America recognition from *The Football News* as a guard last season, is listed at 6-foot-1 — though he might be slightly shorter.

The 305-pound Taylor led the offensive linemen in "pancake" blocks last season. Three times last season he had 17 of the knockdown blocks in a single game. His height was no factor.

Most of the Southwest Conference schools backed off Taylor, who's from Wichita Falls, Texas, because of his height, according to Tenopir. "I think Texas Tech and us were the only ones left" when it came time for Taylor to sign a letter of intent. "If we were more of a dropback (passing) offense, we'd probably want the rangy guys. But body types haven't been a big factor for us," Tenopir said.

"They shouldn't be for anyone. We've taken kids others might not have recruited. We've never been a stickler on how tall a guy is. We should have a recruiting advantage there. I don't know if we do."

Height isn't a significant factor for Tenopir in evaluating recruits. Weight, however, is.

"We're looking for big guys who can move," he said.

Jon Zatechka is the only one of the projected starters listed at less than 300 pounds. He's 290, and "one of the most agile linemen we have," Tenopir said.

The 6-foot-6, 300-pound Treu has gained 48 pounds and yet reduced his body fat from 22 percent to 12 percent after walking on from Lincoln Pius X High School four years ago. He is remarkably quick for someone so big, according to Tenopir. His time in the pro agility run was 4.24.

"It never ceases to amaze me, guys like Treu who can run that way," Tenopir said.

The increasing size of offensive linemen is dramatic from the perspective of a veteran coach. The heaviest starter in the offensive interior in 1974, Tenopir's first season at Nebraska (he assisted Cleve Fischer

with the line), was 6-foot-4, 257-pound tackle Mark Doak. Marvin Crenshaw, the other tackle and an All-American, was 6-foot-6 and 240 pounds. Guards Tom Alward and Stan Hegener, both 6-foot-4, weighed in at 241 and 233, respectively. Center Rik Bonness was 6-foot-4 and 223 pounds.

Nebraska's roster is well-stocked with 300-pound offensive linemen now. Senior Chris Dishman, who moved from tackle to guard to fill the spot vacated by Taylor, is the heaviest of the starters. He's listed at 310 pounds. Junior tackle Eric Anderson checks in at 300 pounds. Junior Fred Pollack, who had a solid spring and is projected as the No. 3 tackle, weighs 305. Senior center Matt Vrzal is 300.

"We have so many big kids," Tenopir said. "In the late 1970's and early 1980's, we had one or two kids that big. We played with guards who were 235 pounds. But you couldn't do that anymore."

Just a decade ago, Nebraska didn't have a starter weighing more than 280 pounds in its offensive line. Tackle Tom Welter was the Cornhuskers' heaviest starter in 1986. He was listed at 6-foot-5 and 280 pounds when they defeated Louisiana State 30-15 in the 1987 Sugar Bowl game.

Much has been made of the change in Nebraska's base defense, from a 5-2 to a 4-3, in identifying the factors that have contributed to the Cornhuskers' remarkable success the last three seasons. But that success also had been a result of the development of strong and fast offensive lines.

In addition, Nebraska's attitude about what the ideal offensive lineman should look like has gone through "cycles," he said. For example, "we went on a 'lean' kick for a while in the mid- to late 1980's. They were lean, but they didn't have enough oomph in their britches to get the job done."

"These kids respond well to coaching. I don't know if that's unique to myself and Dan (Young). It's a little different with linemen. It's easier to establish rapport with linemen because all we have to do is put them up against a guy like Christian Peter, and if they can't handle it, they're not ready."

That sounds simple enough. But it's like suggesting that Nebraska's offensive linemen are simply shaken from trees. Colston was speaking figuratively, of course. ■



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Nebraska heads into the 1996 college football season with an impressive 25-game winning streak, but the Cornhuskers will have to play well early on if they are to continue the streak into the Big 12 Conference portion of the schedule.

Gone are the days of playing Pacific and North Texas, both of which were last-minute replacements for schools that backed out of scheduled games against the Huskers. This season, Nebraska opens up defense of its national championship by playing three teams that finished with a winning record a year ago. Two of the Huskers' opponents also played in a postseason bowl game in 1995.

The Huskers' toughest non-Big 12 foe could be Arizona State, which Nebraska defeated 77-28 in Lincoln last season. The Sun Devils return 21 starters from a team which finished 6-5 last season but won four of their last five games. Arizona State is picked by many college football experts to win the Pac-10 Conference this season.

In addition, the Huskers open the season at home on Sept. 7 against Michigan State, which was 6-5-1 last

season and lost to Louisiana State, 45-26, in the Independence Bowl. Last year, the Huskers pounded the Spartans 50-10, but Michigan State plays host to Big 10 Conference rival Purdue the week before playing Nebraska. Colorado State, 8-4 a year ago, closed out NU's non-conference schedule. The Rams tied for first in the Western Athletic Conference last season, but lost to Kansas State 54-21 in the Holiday Bowl at the end of the year.

Here's a closer look at the Huskers' non-conference opponents:



MICHIGAN STATE

Like the Huskers, the Spartans enter the 1996 season without an experienced quarterback. Tony Banks, who was selected by the St. Louis Rams in the NFL draft last April, is gone after starting nine games last season. All Banks did was throw for 2,089 yards (an average of 232.1 per game) and nine touchdowns.

Todd Schultz, a 6-foot-4, 201-pound junior, is the top quarterback heading into fall camp. Schultz start-

ed three games last fall when Banks was injured and completed 52-of-83 passes for 570 yards and two touchdowns. Schultz will have to battle Damien Hiram for the starting job. Hiram played in just five games a year ago and completed 2-of-3 passes for 27 yards.

But Banks isn't the only skilled player the Spartans must replace. Gone is second leading rusher in Scott Greene and their second leading receiver in Muhsin Muhammad. Greene rushed for 590 yards at fullback a year ago. His 17 touchdowns will also be tough to replace. Muhammad caught 50 passes for a team-leading 867 yards and three touchdowns.

"The biggest concerns we have on offense are replacing Banks at quarterback, Greene in the backfield and Muhammad's production at receiver," Michigan State coach Nick Saban said. "They meant a awful lot to this team. But we have some experience returning at every offensive position."

Don't feel too sorry for the Spartans' offense. Back is junior tailback Marc Renaud, who rushed for 1,057 yards and scored three touchdowns. Also returning is wide receiver Derrick Mason, who caught a team-best 53

Non-CONFERENCE PREVIEW STATING THEIR CASE

With games against three "state" schools from Michigan, Arizona and Colorado, the Huskers can prep for a Big 12, national title chase • Mark Derowitsch



passes for 787 yards and four touchdowns.

Up front, right guard Brian Mosallam (6-2, 280) and right tackle Flozell Adams (6-7, 335) are back, but the left side of the line was hit hard. Redshirted freshman Casey Jensen is listed as the top center, a position the Spartans have no returning player who saw action a year ago. At left guard, Scott Shaw and at tackle Dave Mudge will open fall drills as projected starters.

Defensively, the Spartans should be improved with eight starters returning. After giving up 50 points to the Huskers, the Spartans held their opponents to 21 points or less five of their next 10 regular season games.

Junior middle linebacker Reggie Garnett, an honorable mention All-Big 10 selection a year ago, returns to anchor a very experienced linebacking corp. Garnett led Michigan State with 111 tackles last season. He also picked off one pass.

Also back are strongside outside linebacker Carl Reaves (84 tackles) and weakside outside linebacker Ike Reese (76 tackles, two sacks).

Up front, right tackle Chris Smith is the Spartans' only experienced player.

The secondary is also experienced, with three starters back. Safety Sorie Kanu picked off two passes as a freshman, while safety Marvin Wright added one interception.

Right cornerback Ray Hill started last season, making 44 tackles and breaking up eight passes, while senior Brian Echols, penciled in as the starter at the other corner, played in all 12 games, but saw limited action.



ARIZONA STATE

The Huskers return to the place where they won their second straight national championship on Sept. 21 when they play Arizona State in Sun Devil Stadium at Tempe, Ariz. This game may not be as easy as the Huskers' 62-24 victory

Reggie Garnett returns to anchor a very experienced Michigan State linebacking corp.

over Florida on Jan. 2 in the Fiesta Bowl.

A year ago, Nebraska rolled up 686 yards of offense to post a 77-28 win. The Huskers scored 63 points in the first half en route to the win.

But this is a much improved Arizona State team, led by quarterback Jake "The Snake" Plummer, who threw for 2,222 yards and 17 touchdowns and was a first-team All-Pac 10 selection a year ago. Plummer had success against Nebraska last season, throwing for 273 yards and three touchdowns.

"Jake has the entire package," Arizona State coach Bruce Snyder said. "He's smart, and he can think on his feet. He has great field vision, in fact, he probably sees more of the field than any quarterback I have coached."

Plummer needs only 667 yards to become the Sun Devils' all-time leading passer and break Danny White's school record of 6,717 career passing yards.

Plummer also returns his three favorite targets — wide receiver Keith Poole and tight end Steve Bush. Poole led the team with 55 catches for 1,036 yards and seven touchdowns a year ago, Bush added 1,826 receptions for 241 yards and three scores, while Mustafa made 18 catches for 233 yards and two TDs.

The Sun Devils don't run much, but tailback Michael Martin did gain 566 yards in a backup role a year ago. Terry Battle will split time with Martin after gaining 474 yards a year ago.

Arizona State has one of the top

Jake Plummer, who threw for 273 yards and three touchdowns against Nebraska last year, will give the Black Shirts their first major test.

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offensive linemen in tackle Juan Roque, a 6-8, 319-pound senior. Roque was a first-team all-conference selection pick and could be a candidate for the Outland Trophy and the Lombardi Award, which are given to interior linemen.

"Juan is big-time," said ASU offensive coordinator Dan Cozzetto.

Grey Ruegamer (6-5, 287) will start at right tackle. He started the first four games a year ago at center before being moved to his new position. At guards, Glen Gable will get the starting nod on the right side of the line, while Pat Thompson is slated to be the starter on the left side. At center, Kirk Orbertson started the final seven games of the season after he returned from a knee injury.

The Sun Devils are just as experienced on defense with nine starters back.

At linebacker, Scott Von der Ahe and Derek Smith are back. Von der Ahe led the team with 92 tackles, recorded one sack and picked off one pass and returned it for a touchdown. Smith had 33 tackles.

Up front, tackles Jason Reynolds, who had six sacks, and Shawn Swayda return in the middle, while rush ends Brent Burnstein (6-8, 270) and Malchi Crawford are also back after starting the final five games.

In the secondary, strong safety Damien Richardson made 74 tackles a year ago. Cornerback Jason Simmons deflected 11 passes last season and also was in on 62 tackles. Mitchell Freedman started nine games at free safety.



COLORADO STATE

Nebraska can no longer count on Colorado State coming to Lincoln and leaving suffering a major defeat. Colorado State, for the past two seasons, has been a legitimate Top 20 team, and this year should be no exception.

The last two seasons, the Rams have posted an 18-6 record, including a 10-2 campaign in 1994, and have represented the WAC in the Holiday Bowl both years. Last year, in the regular season, Colorado State lost to Colorado, Brigham Young and New Mexico before dropping a decision to Kansas State in the Holiday Bowl.

One thing Colorado State coach Sonny Lubick installed when he

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arrived in Fort Collins three seasons ago was a tradition of solid defense.

This fall, six starters are back on a defense that led the WAC in total defense, giving up an average of 320 yards per game. But the Rams must replace four defenders who earned first-team all-conference honors last season, including end Brady Smith, who was the WAC's Defensive Player of the Year in 1995.

Tackles Kirk Bowman and DeVaughn Hawkins return to anchor the defense against the run. Bowman missed the final nine games of the season after suffering a knee injury, but he should be ready to go by the time the season begins. Hawkins started every game and was in on 39 tackles and also added two sacks.

The Rams are also set at outside linebacker with the return of Willie Taylor and Nate Kvamme. Both players received honorable mention All-WAC honors a year ago as part-time starter roles.

The secondary must nearly be rebuilt. Strong safety Steve Standifer is the lone starter to come back for the 1996 campaign.

Smith and Sean Moran are gone from their spots at defensive end, but Lubick will count on Adrian



Moses Moreno and Colorado State have all but erased the "pushover" tag that used to hang above their helmets.

Ross and George Schramm, along with Steve Trammell, who started at tackle last season after Bowman went down with an injury.

Colorado State's strength may be its offense this season, with nine starters back on a squad that averaged nearly 400 yards of total offense per game.

The Rams' receiving corps returns, led by Paul Turner, who made a team-high 41 receptions for

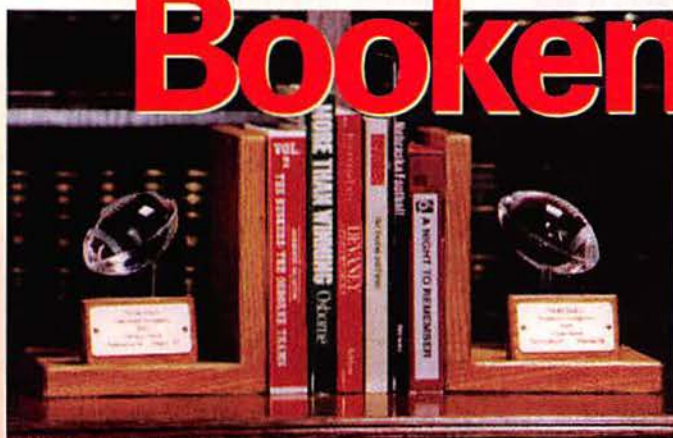
678 yards last season. Jeremy Calhoun had 20 catches and H-backs Darrell Ballard and Joey Porter were also reliable last season.

Damon Washington will lead the running game after rushing for 600 yards as a true freshman last season. He'll be backed up by Calvin Branch, a transfer from Iowa State.

At quarterback, Moses Moreno and Daren Wilkinson will split time again this fall. Moreno completed 56.6 percent of his passes for 1,439 yards and 11 touchdowns. Wilkinson threw for 850 yards and six scores, but he also threw 10 interceptions. ■

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The Next Wave

Many athletes distinguished themselves as prospects for the 1997 signing day with stellar junior seasons

By **JAMES HALE**

Even though two-a-days haven't started, it isn't too early to mention who is going to receive national attention from the top colleges in 1997.

Rohan Davey (6-foot-3, 200 pounds, 4.7 40-yard dash) of Hialeah (Miami Lakes), Fla., was named the National Junior Player of the Year by the *National Recruiting Advisor*.

That gives Davey a good head start on being the most prized quarterback recruit of the season. Davey has size, speed, a great feel for the passing game, great arm strength and, most importantly, he wins.

Davey lead Miami Lakes to the first round in the playoffs by throwing for 1,606 yards, completing 100 of 172 passes for 21 touchdowns.

"I am already getting asked this question all the time and I think I surprise some people that I have five favorites," Davey said. "This could change, and probably will, but I have always followed Florida State and Miami locally, and I like West Virginia, Penn State and Tennessee."

Kenny Kelly (6-2, 180, 4.8) of Tampa (Catholic), Fla., will push Davey for top honors in Florida.

Randy Fasani (6-3, 210, 4.8) of Loomis (Del Oro), Calif. was named the top quarterback at the prestigious Stanford quarterback camp before his junior season. Fasani lived up to his billing by throwing for 2,000 yards.

Two quarterbacks in Texas are drawing tremendous attention. **Ed Stansberry** (6-3, 200, 4.6) of El Paso (Irvin) is a great athlete who can run any offense. **Matt Schobel** (6-4, 215, 4.65) of Columbus rushed for 1,476 yards and passed for a over 1,100.

Daniel Cobb (6-4, 200, 4.8) of Harrison, Ga., is the top quarterback in the South. **Zack Kustock** (6-3, 185, 4.6) of Orland Park (Sandburg), Ill., is highly thought of in the Big Ten area, and **Erik Lipton** (6-4, 200, 4.7) of Arundel, Md., is also receiving tremendous attention.

At running back, **Darnell**



The Altus Times

Wide receiver Julius McMullen from Altus, Okla., is one of the top prospects in the Big 12 region.

McDonald (5-11, 190, 4.4) of Englewood (Cherry Creek), Colo., is drawing comparisons to Indianapolis' Marshall Faulk and New England's Curtis Martin. McDonald's 2,567 yards and 32 touchdowns earned him Colorado Player of the Years honors as a junior.

Jasper Sanks (6-2, 200, 4.4) of Columbus (Carver), Ga., has been a known commodity since his freshman season. He can bench 300 pounds.

Dawayne Woods (5-9, 180, 4.32) of Slidell (Salmen), La., is fast, shifty and elusive. He rushed for 2,616 yards and 31 touchdowns last season.

Hodges Mitchell (5-9, 190, 4.6) of Dallas (Skyline) is small but ranked as the best in Texas. **Jamar Sheppard** (6-1, 195, 4.4) of Sacred Heart, Calif., is a big-time talent out west.

At wide receiver, **Julius McMullen** (5-11, 170, 4.3) of Altus, Okla., is rated the top player in Oklahoma. Despite playing in a

wishbone-oriented offense, McMullen rushed for 350 yards, returned nine kicks for touchdowns and scored six more on the ground.

Kenyon Rambo (6-1, 180, 4.4) of Long Beach (Polytechnic), Calif., could be the next great player to come out of Poly if he can overcome a gunshot wound to the stomach he suffered this past spring.

Tight end **Antoine Harris** (6-4, 230, 4.6) of Los Angeles (Loyola) earns the glamour of being named the top prospect in California.

A good offensive lineman is worth almost as much as a franchise running back. **Terrance Metcalf** (6-4, 288, 4.9) of Clarksdale, Miss., has NFL potential after earning All-State honors last season.

The best offensive lineman in California is **Nic Hawkins** (6-5, 305, 5.2) of Visalia (Mt. Whitney), Calif. **Bryan Kula** (6-4, 275, 5.0) of Phoenix (Brophy Prep) is another great player out west along with **Joe Major** (6-4, 290, 5.2) of Redmond, Wash.

The best in Texas is **Andre Pittman** (6-4, 300, 5.1) of Houston (Lamar).

Josh Mitchell (6-5, 283, 5.0) of Central Bucks (East) and **Jake Bisson** (6-8, 285, 4.9) of Upper St. Clair are the best in Pennsylvania and are drawing attention.

Colleges looking for the next Reggie White, Bruce Smith or Charles Haley need to look at Tyler (John Tyler), Texas, product **David Warren** (6-5, 240, 4.6). Warren is the most athletic defensive end in the country. He has the speed to get to the quarterback as evidence by his district championship in the 200-meters as a sophomore.

In California, enough praise can't be showered on **Andre Carter** (6-4, 230, 4.6) of San Jose (Oak Grove). Carter set the state record for sacks last year.

In Florida, three names surface as top recruits. **Char-Ron Dorsey** (6-6, 300, 5.0) of Jacksonville (The Bolles), **Willie Sams** (6-5, 265, 5.0) of Bradenton (Southeast) and **Sam Matthews** (6-6, 270, 5.0) of

Jacksonville (The Bolles) are all considered top 50 national material.

Tryone Robertson (6-4, 260, 4.9) of Danville (Washington), Va., and **Hubert Thompson** (6-6, 255, 4.8) of Hillside (Proviso West), Ill., are two more national recruits in the defensive line making this position one of the strongest in the country.

Ron Graham (6-3, 230, 4.6) of Pittsburgh (Penn Hills), Pa., and **Harold Jackson** (6-2, 235, 4.6) of Wilkes-Barre (Gar), Pa., are two linebackers who are getting the eye of recruiters.

Jason Ott (6-3, 245, 4.6) of Cincinnati (Elder), Ohio, is the best out of the Buckeye State and **Barris Grant** (6-2, 235, 4.6) of Irvington, N.J., is a dominator from the East.

Grant Irons (6-5, 220, 4.6) of Conroe (McCullough), Texas, is the brother of Jarrett Irons who plays for Michigan and will be an All-Big Ten selection. Irons grabs the label of best linebacker in Texas which draws a lot of attention nationally.

Scouts are raving about **Courtney Bullard** (6-3, 210, 4.5) of Miami (Southridge), Fla., and **Andra Davis** (6-3, 220, 4.5) of Live Oak (Sewanee), Fla.

Michael Pollard (6-1, 215, 4.5) of Long Beach (Polytechnic), Calif., and **Maleafou McKenzie** (6-0, 200, 4.5) of Mission Viejo (Capistrano Valley), Calif., will be heavily recruited.

In the secondary, **Eric Parker** (6-1, 165, 4.4) of Joliet, Ill. snagged 13 interceptions last season, returning six for touchdowns. **Deon Grant** (6-3, 195, 4.5) of Augusta (Josey), Ga., and **Robert Carswell** (6-2, 200, 4.5) of Stone Mountain, Ga., have a good combination of size and speed.

Enoch Mpoo (5-10, 175, 4.4) of Olathe (North), Kan., runs a 10.5 time in the 100-meters.

Ife Olathete (6-2, 200, 4.5) of Los Alamitos, Calif., has great potential and shows an interest in USC.

Brookhaven (Bellport), N.Y., native **Opoku Johnson** (6-1, 175, 4.4) is a fabulous athlete, evident by his state long jump title. He had 103 total tackles last year in addition to a 27.3 yard per catch average.

Ryan Humphrey (6-7, 225, 4.7) of Tulsa (Washington), Okla., is big time in both football and basketball. A reported top 20 talent in hoops, Humphrey said he wants to play both sports in college.

It's early, but that is some of the very best with several more waiting to be mentioned. Look for more national standouts to be featured in future issues. ■

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Preseason Prospects

The following is a brief look at the players who will be among the best high school seniors in 1996 and members of the best recruiting classes in '97

Quarterbacks

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Greg Cicero	6-4	180	Anaheim (Servite), Calif.
Daniel Cobb	6-4	200	Harrison, Ga.
Randy Fasani	6-3	210	Loomis (Del Oro), Calif.
Rohan Davey	6-2	200	Hialeah (Miami Lakes), Fla.
Kenny Kelly	6-2	180	Tampa (Catholic), Fla.
Zack Kustock	6-3	185	Orland Park (Sandburg), Ill.
Erik Lipton	6-4	200	Arundel, Md.
Lucas Phillips	6-3	185	Baltimore (Mt. St. Joseph's), Md.
Lorenzo Guess	6-3	190	Wayne (Memorial), Mich.
Eric Crouch	6-1	185	Millard (North), Neb.
Matt Schobel	6-4	215	Columbus, Texas
Ed Stansberry	6-3	200	El Paso (Irvin), Texas
Tim Olmstead	6-4	195	Woodberry (Forest), Va.

Wide Receivers

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Herman Banks	6-2	170	Hartselle, Ala.
Bruce Branch	6-1	180	Richmond (Huguenot), Va.
Charlie Campbell	6-2	170	Youngstown (Liberty), Ohio
Chris Chambers	6-3	170	Bedford, Ohio
Reggie Germany	6-2	190	St. Louis (Hazelwood East), Mo.
Darrell Jackson	6-1	175	Tampa (Catholic), Fla.
Shalando Jones	6-2	183	Pontotoc, Miss.
Julius McMullen	5-11	170	Altus, Okla.
Kenyon Rambo	6-1	180	Long Beach (Polytechnic), Calif.
Brian Scott	6-2	195	Darlington (Mayo), S.C.
Steve Shipp	6-2	185	Charlotte (West Charlotte), N.C.
Justin Taplin	6-2	195	Tempe, Ariz.

Running Backs

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Rufus Brown	6-1	195	Belzoni (Humphrey's County), Miss.
Corey Ferguson	6-0	190	Union, N.J.
Art Gipson	6-1	210	Fontana, Calif.
Jamal Lewis	6-1	220	Atlanta (Douglass), Ga.
Darnell McDonald	5-11	190	Englewood (Cherry Creek), Colo.
Hodges Mitchell	5-9	190	Dallas (Skyline), Texas
J.R. Mounts	5-11	205	Key West, Fla.
James Mungro	5-11	185	East Stroudsburg, Pa.
Jasper Sanks	6-2	200	Columbus (Carver), Ga.
Anthony Saunders	6-3	220	West Guilford, N.C.
Jamar Sheppard	6-1	195	Sacred Heart, Calif.
L.P. Spence	6-3	195	Corinth, Miss.
Travis Stephens	5-11	175	Clarksville (Northeast), Tenn.
Antoneyo Williams	6-0	200	Tuscaloosa (Central), Ala.
LaRon Williams	6-3	195	Evansville (Bosse), Ind.
Robert Williams	6-4	210	Dallas (Bishop Lynch), Texas
Antoine Womack	6-0	210	Hampton (Phoebe), Va.
Dawayne Woods	5-9	180	Slidell (Salmen), La.

Offensive Line

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Jake Bisson	6-8	285	Upper St. Clair, Pa.
Jason Brooks	6-4	270	Cleveland (St. Ignatius), Ohio
Joseph Burton	6-5	275	Greenwich, Ct.
Dacorve Hampton	6-4	325	Memphis (Westwood), Tenn.
Nic Hawkins	6-5	305	Visalia (Mt. Whitney), Calif.
Bryan Kula	6-4	275	Phoenix (Brophy Prep), Ariz.
Joe Major	6-4	290	Redmond, Wash.
Terrance Metcalf	6-4	288	Clarksdale, Miss.
Josh Mitchell	6-5	283	Central Bucks (East), Pa.
Andre Pittman	6-4	300	Houston (Lamar), Texas
Melvin Richey	6-5	275	Decatur (Southwest DeKalb), Ga.
Victor Rogers	6-7	280	Federal Way (Decatur), Wash.
Fred Weary	6-5	260	Montgomery (Lee), Ala.
Maurice Williams	6-6	280	Detroit (Pershing), Mich.
Ralph Zarate	6-5	265	Tucson, Ariz.

Defensive Line

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Andre Carter	6-4	230	San Jose (Oak Grove), Calif.
Kozie Coleman	6-5	300	Decatur (Shamrock), Ga.
Dorsett Davis	6-6	275	Cleveland (East Side), Miss.
Char-Ron Dorsey	6-6	300	Jacksonville (The Bolles), Fla.
Roderick Kelly	6-4	245	Houston (Yates), Texas
Gunther Kryson	6-5	250	Clark (Johnson Regional), N.J.
Sam Matthews	6-6	270	Jacksonville (The Bolles), Fla.
Thomas Pittman	6-4	260	East St. John's, La.
Tyrone Robertson	6-4	255	Hillside (Proviso West), Ill.
Willie Sams	6-5	265	Bradenton (Southeast), Fla.
Kenny Smith	6-4	285	Meridan, Miss.
Hubert Thompson	6-6	255	Hillside (Proviso West), Ill.
David Warren	6-5	240	Tyler (John Tyler), Texas
De'Nard Whitfield	6-4	215	Denison, Texas

Tight Ends

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Chris Brooks	6-4	235	Newton, Texas
Joe Domingaux	6-5	225	Crowley, La.
Antoine Harris	6-4	230	Los Angeles (Loyola), Calif.
Austin Lee	6-4	240	Post Falls, Idaho
Alan Marlow	6-5	240	St. Louis (Kirkwood), Mo.
Chris Stevens	6-6	245	Logan, Utah

Linebackers

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Roylin Bradley	6-2	220	La Marque, Texas
Courtney Bullard	6-3	210	Miami (Southridge), Fla.
Andra Davis	6-3	220	Live Oak (Sewanee), Fla.
Jake Frysinger	6-4	220	Gross Ile, Mich.
Ron Graham	6-4	230	Pittsburgh (Penn Hills), Pa.
Barris Grant	6-2	235	Irvington, N.J.
Pernell Griffin	6-3	220	Williamston, N.C.
Reggie Hayward	6-5	225	Dalton (Thornridge), Ill.
Grant Irms	6-5	220	Conroe (McCullough), Texas
Harold Jackson	6-2	235	Wilkes-Barre (Gar), Pa.
Derrick Johnson	5-10	235	Pine Bluff, Ark.
Tito Lee	6-0	215	Brentwood (Academy), Tenn.
DeAngelo Lloyd	6-6	225	Charlotte (Independence), N.C.
Maleafou McKenzie	6-0	200	Mission Viejo (Capistrano Valley), Calif.
Jason Ott	6-3	245	Cincinnati (Elder), Ohio
Michael Pollard	6-1	215	Long Beach (Polytechnic), Calif.
Kyle Vandenbosch	6-4	240	Inwood (West Lyon), Iowa

Secondary

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Robert Carswell	6-2	200	Stone Mountain, Ga.
Derrick Gibson	6-2	185	Miami (Killian), Fla.
Deon Grant	6-3	195	Augusta (Jesey), Ga.
Ryan Humphrey	6-7	225	Tulsa (Washington), Okla.
Robert Jackson	6-2	200	Corvallis (Crescent Valley), Ore.
Opoku Johnson	6-1	175	Brookhaven (Bellport), N.Y.
Travis Minor	6-0	190	Baton Rouge (Catholic), La.
Enoch Mpo	5-10	175	Olathe (North), Kan.
John Norman	6-4	190	Midland (Lee), Texas
William Norwood	6-4	195	Inglewood, N.J.
Ife Olahete	6-2	200	Los Alamitos, Calif.
Eric Parker	6-1	165	Joliet, Ill.
Sean Penne	6-2	215	Youngstown (Ursuline), Ohio
Rodney Perry	6-0	185	Santa Ana (Mater Dei), Calif.
Stanford Simmons	6-2	195	Ashland (Clay County), Ala.
Marcus Tuiasosopo	6-2	210	Woodinville, Wash.
Joe Walker	6-1	180	Galena (North Shore), Texas

Punters/Kickers

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Zak Haselmo	6-1	180	Lompoc (Cabrillo), Calif.
Toby Shears	6-1	165	Leadville (Lake), Colo.
Kerry Stenke	6-0	180	Green Bay (Preble), Wisc.

Athletes

	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Lavar Arrington	6-4	220	Pittsburgh (North Hills), Pa.
Demotray Carter	5-9	180	Pensacola, Fla.
Ryan Humphrey	6-7	225	Tulsa (Washington), Okla.
Rodney Perry	6-0	185	Santa Ana (Mater Dei), Calif.
Edmond Stansbury	6-2	215	El Paso (Irvin), Texas

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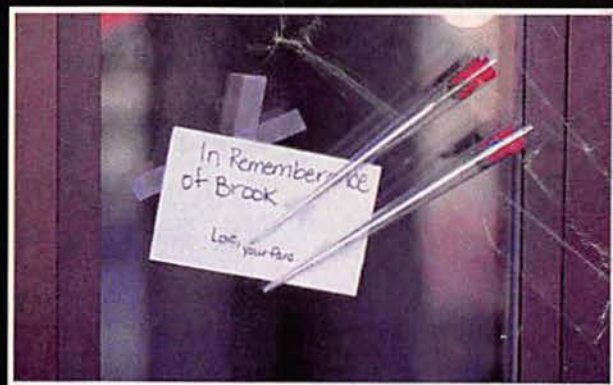
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BROOK BERRINGER

(1973-1996)

The massive stage, built in the west stands of Memorial Stadium, was being dismantled on the Friday before spring football practice at Nebraska would conclude with the annual intrasquad game.

The stage was to be used for the "Night of Champions" celebration that evening.

Nearly 37,000 tickets had been sold for the event, which had been planned to honor, among other things, the Cornhuskers' 1995 national championship football and volleyball teams.

On the day of the event, however, the stage was taken down, the celebration canceled.

With the activity on the stage as a backdrop, a television reporter interviewed Nebraska football player Mike Minter in the west corner of the south end zone in the late morning on Friday.

The reporter balanced a camera on his shoulder and held out a microphone for Minter.

The two figures were dwarfed by the vast expanse of the stadium.

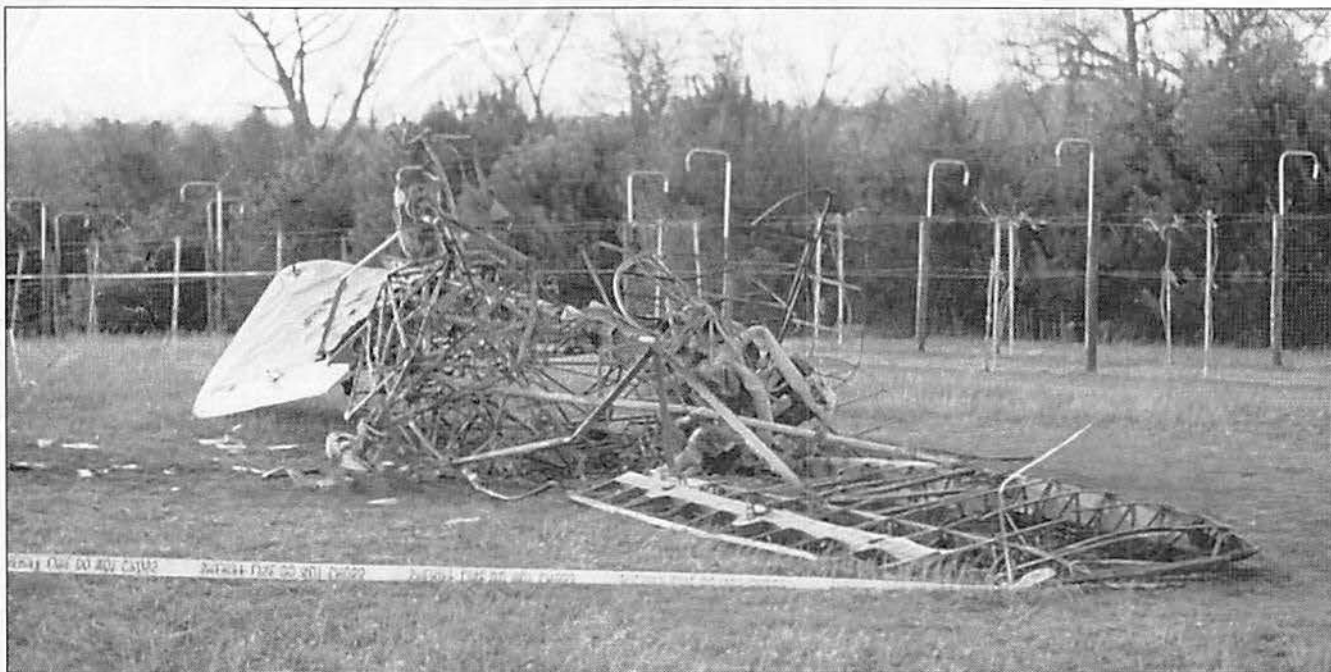
With the brief interview concluded, Minter started to walk toward the tunnel that leads to the varsity locker room beneath the South Stadium. He took five steps, before stopping to shake the hand of a familiar visitor who was standing quietly in the shadow of the stands. The handshake became a hug.

The usually up-beat Minter was somber. "I didn't believe it yesterday," he said.

"It" was the sad news that Brook Berringer, Minter's Cornhusker teammate of three seasons, had died in a small plane crash the previous afternoon. Berringer was piloting the plane, which went down just after taking off from a field near Raymond, Neb. Tobey Lake, the brother of Berringer's girlfriend, also died in the crash. "When I heard about it on the radio this morning, I broke down," said Minter.

That was a common response among coaches, teammates and fans, as well as anyone else who knew or felt as if they knew Berringer, the charismatic young man from Goodland, Kan.

Two small, red roses had been taped to the doors at the west entrance of the Hewitt Center, along with a note that said, "In Remembrance of



Brook Berringer's death in a plane crash, brought an end to the "Night of Champions" celebration and tears to the eyes of former teammates and cheerleaders as a tribute video was played during the Red-White game.

Brook . . . Love, your fans."

Two other roses — one red, one white — were leaning against a door.

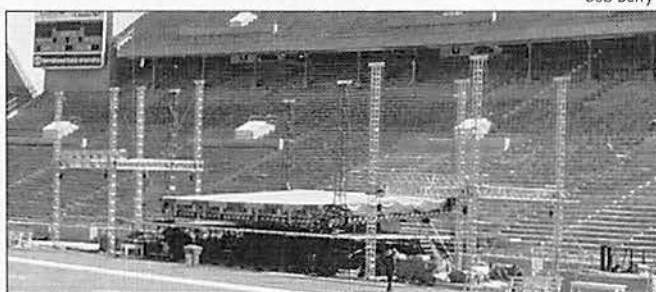
Berringer's death, at age 22, left the Cornhusker community paralyzed with sorrow and caused Athletic Director Bill Byrne to cancel the "Night of Champions" celebration. Refunds were offered to the 36,827 who purchased the \$3 tickets in advance. Hardly anyone requested refunds.

In fact, some asked if they could purchase tickets after the event was canceled as a way of contributing to a memorial fund for Berringer. Money not refunded was to be used for that purpose.

The country band Sawyer Brown was scheduled to perform at the celebration. Berringer was a friend of the band, which had made plans to allow him to join in on a song or two.

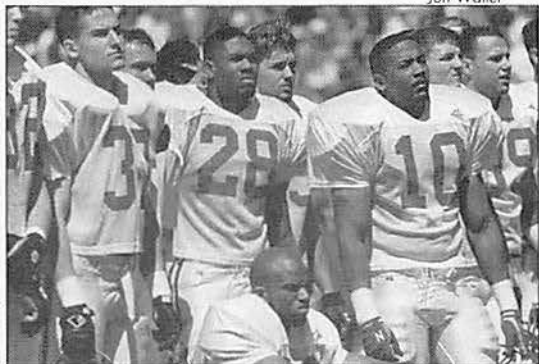
Even though Berringer started only seven games during his career at Nebraska, and played sparingly as Tommie Frazier's backup last season, he achieved the celebrity status of an All-American and elicited a special affection from people who had never met or even come in contact with him.

He was small-town, with everything positive that connotes. He was born in Scottsbluff, Neb., and grew up in Goodland. He was overwhelmed by the enormity of the Cornhusker football program when he arrived, the story went. Some wondered if he could overcome that

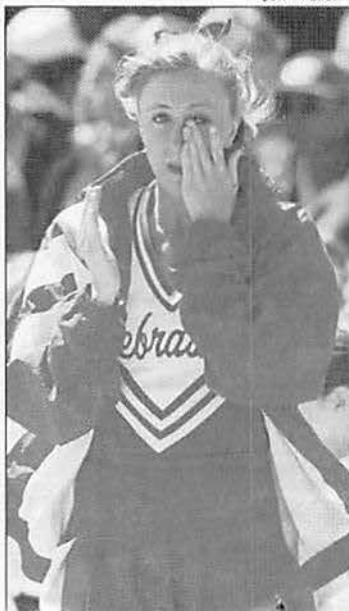


Jon Waller

Bob Berry



Jon Waller



initial gee-whiz impression.

He had solid, small-town values. His mom, Jan, was, and is, an elementary school teacher. His father, Warren, died of cancer at age 39. Even though he was only 7-years-old when his dad died, Brook had already learned to enjoy the things his dad enjoyed, among them hunting and fishing.

Warren Berringer bought Brook a fishing license on his first birthday.

Although their time together was brief, it was obviously substantial. "I know when I'm out there throwing a touchdown pass, my dad's got the best seat in the house," Brook once said.

Berringer was Vince Ferragamo handsome. And, under different circumstances, he almost certainly would have achieved the kind of passing success for which Ferragamo is remembered.

In 1994, with Frazier sidelined by blood clots, Berringer came off the bench to lead the Cornhuskers to the Big Eight title and a national championship game against Miami in the Orange Bowl. In what amounted to eight games, Berringer completed 94-of-151 passes for 1,295 yards and 10 touchdowns.

His pass efficiency ranking for the 1994 season (149.5) is the sixth-high-

est all-time at Nebraska. The 1,295 passing yards rank 14th on the Cornhuskers' all-time single-season list.

That despite the fact he threw only three passes, total, in the first three games.

Berringer captured the imagination not only of Nebraska football fans but also of those who identified with his situation. He was an understudy, a backup, who got a chance and succeeded.

With limited game experience, he started for the first time against Wyoming in 1994 and directed a come-from-behind, 42-32 victory. Late in the first half, he led the Cornhuskers on a 64-yard touchdown drive that featured seven consecutive pass completions and was capped by his determined, 5-yard run with 12 seconds remaining before the intermission. That dramatic scoring drive was one of four in a row for which he was responsible during a seven-minute span of the second and third quarters.

And, fans learned afterward, Berringer had played with a partially collapsed lung.

His fondest memory as a player was of the Wyoming game, he said, because it was his first start. But his performance against Colorado probably earned him the most respect from others.

The Buffaloes were ranked second or third nationally, depending on the poll, and Colorado coach Bill McCartney had publicly questioned whether Berringer could handle the pressure of a game with Big Eight and national championship implications. Berringer could handle it. And he did, completing 12-of-17 passes for 142 yards and one touchdown in a surprisingly easy 24-7 win.

A week later, after Nebraska had moved to No. 1 in the national rankings, Berringer completed 13-of-18 passes for 267 yards and two touchdowns in a 45-17 victory against Kansas.

Such efforts in Frazier's absence made it difficult for Berringer to return to being a backup, which is what happened when the Cornhuskers played Miami for the national championship in the 1995 Orange Bowl game. But again he accepted his position with equanimity, if not grace.

And when he was needed, Berringer responded, teaming with tight end Mark Gilman on a 19-yard touchdown pass to put Nebraska on the scoreboard midway through

the second quarter.

Such accomplishments, however, don't explain Berringer's unique place in the hearts of those who miss him now even though they might not have come to know him in any other way.

He was an excellent student, graduating with a degree in business administration in December. He was active in the community, speaking to children and adults. He served as a student-athlete ambassador for the athletic department. And he was involved in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He was supposed to speak at an FCA banquet at the Devaney Sports Center the night of the day he died.

"I think if you had somebody that you wanted your son to be like, Brook would be a good place to start," said Tom Osborne, who spoke at Berringer's funeral in Goodland, Kan.

The funeral for Berringer and Lake was held at Goodland High School's Max Jones Fieldhouse. More than 4,000, including a busload of Cornhusker coaches and players, attended the service.

Osborne and Berringer had much in common, both on and off the field.

A football team is like "an extended family," Osborne said after the spring game. "When something happens, it's like part of the family. It's not quite like losing a son or a daughter, but it's close.

"I have no regrets. The Brook I knew, there was nothing he could have done better. The length (of his life) was not what you would have liked. But the quality couldn't have been better."

Berringer's future was bright. He expected to be chosen in a late round of the National Football League draft. It appeared

he would have an opportunity to play professionally. The first round of the draft was held two days after his death, at Madison Square Garden in New York City. NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue asked for a moment of silence in memory of Berringer before the first selection was made.

Berringer was 22 years old when he died, doing something he loved. As with everything he did, he flew with obvious joy and passion. Quoting from "To An Athlete Dying Young," by the poet A.E. Housman: "There, like the wind through woods in riot, / Through him the gale of life blew high . . ."

And so, for him, the temporary stage in Memorial Stadium was taken down, unused. In the warmth and rejuvenation of springtime, there was nothing to celebrate, only Berringer's death to mourn. ■



Bob Berry



Scott Smith

Berringer saved the Huskers' season in 1994 when he took over for the injured Frazier and led the Huskers to the national title game.

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